



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

**Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing
Friday, February 17, 2012**

Senator Harp and Rep. Walker and distinguished members of the committee, please accept this written testimony on behalf of the Alzheimer's Association, CT Chapter (The Association).

The Alzheimer's Association is a donor supported, non-profit organization serving the needs of families, health care professionals and those individuals who are affected with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The Association provides information and resources, support groups, education and training, and a 24 hour, 7 day a week Helpline.

We appreciate your support of the Alzheimer's Statewide Respite program and request that funding be restored for this essential **community-based program** that provides much needed relief for exhausted and stressed caregivers. Family caregivers provide most of the care for individuals with dementia so they can remain at home, delaying institutionalization and saving state Medicaid dollars.

The Alzheimer's Statewide Respite Program

In Connecticut, there are over 70,000 citizens with Alzheimer's or other related dementia and more than 125,000 caregivers. Since its inception, the Statewide Respite Care Program has continued to be a success and provides the resources to a caregiver to establish an effective plan of care for the individual with Alzheimer's Disease and allows the family caregiver much needed periods of respite to care for their loved-ones.

In Connecticut, caregivers provide over \$1.6 billion in uncompensated services and endure significant physical and mental stress, and truly are the backbone of the long-term care system. Alzheimer's also places significant financial burdens on families and businesses. Businesses lose billions a year in lost productivity and replacement expenses for employees who miss work or quit to care for a relative, according to the National Institute on Aging.

Alzheimer patients are most at risk of nursing home transition due to its unrelenting, progressive condition that destroys brain cells. On average, total Medicaid and

Medicare costs for health care services, long-term and hospice care are three times higher for older people living with Alzheimer's than for other older people.

The average respite grant of \$2,500 per client saves the state Medicaid dollars, when considering the average cost of nursing institutionalization is \$79,000.00 per year. In addition, most individuals prefer to remain in the comfort of their homes where feasible. Seventy percent of individuals with Alzheimer's live at home with their loved-ones.

Outcome measures demonstrate a high level of satisfaction from program participants, while the changing needs of families continue to demand interventions on the part of the care managers to accommodate variable family dynamics and service needs. In fact, 92% of program participants indicated that the services were beneficial in assisting the client in remaining at home during some portion of the program year, and 79% stated the care recipient was able to remain home for the entire program year, and 98% affirmatively responded the program was effective in improving the caregiver and client's quality of life and reducing caregiver stress.

The Governor's proposal to cut \$290,000.00 from this program will impact over a hundred individuals and their families who rely on critical resources and assistance to support or care for their loved ones. As demonstrated by a testimonial from a family caregiver: *"This is the most wonderful program. I do not know how I could ever bring myself to put my Mom into a facility; even though it might become necessary one day, this program allowed us to keep her in her familiar surroundings. Thank you so much."*

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in requesting restoration of funding. The Alzheimer's Association asks that you not adopt the governor's proposal to cut \$229,000.00 for these services. Please feel free to contact me at Laurie.julian@alz.org, or (860) 828-2828.