



Testimony to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Presented By Mag Morelli, President

March 12, 2012

In Support Of Senate Bill 25, An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State for Capital Improvements, Transportation and other Purposes

Good morning Senator Daily, Representative Widlitz, and members of the Committee. My name is Mag Morelli and I am the President of LeadingAge Connecticut, a membership organization representing over 130 mission-driven and not-for-profit provider organizations serving older adults across the continuum of long term care including housing for the elderly, home care and skilled nursing facilities. (LeadingAge Connecticut was formerly named the *Connecticut Association of Not-for-profit Providers for the Aging*.) Our members are sponsored by religious, fraternal, community, and municipal organizations that are committed to providing quality care and services to their residents and clients. Our member organizations, many of which have served their communities for generations, are dedicated to expanding the world of possibilities for aging.

On behalf of LeadingAge Connecticut, I would like to testify in support of Senate Bill 25 and specifically in support of both the Governor's commitment to housing development, including the expansion of congregate and elderly housing with services, and his proposal to assist in modernizing, restructuring, diversifying and/or downsizing of existing nursing homes as part of the long term care rightsizing effort.

Affordable Senior Housing with Services

There is a growing demand for affordable senior housing units across the state as demonstrated by the lengthy waiting lists being maintained by our twenty-four elderly housing site members. The waiting lists are reflective of the success of our state's nationally praised model of providing affordable community based services to congregate and elderly housing residents which has allowed older adults to age in place and remain in their affordable housing units. Unfortunately, the shortage of available units is thwarting efforts to provide other older adults with the same opportunity.

Linking affordable senior housing with services is one of the answers to our state's quest to balance the long term care system. Connecticut has already developed several nationally acclaimed models of housing with services including allowing assisted living services to be delivered within our state congregate and HUD 202 housing sites and the four pilot affordable assisted living demonstration sites. We have excellent models – we just need to develop more sites to make more units available. Governor Malloy's housing proposals recognize this and we strongly support their passage.

The State's Long Term Care Rightsizing Initiative: Nursing Home Diversifying, Downsizing and /or Modernization

LeadingAge Connecticut is very pleased that the Governor has not abandoned the nursing home as Connecticut creates a rightsizing strategic plan for our long term care system. The nursing home is a very important element of the long term care continuum and we strongly support the Governor's initiative to provide the resources needed to assist in modernizing, restructuring, diversifying and/or downsizing existing nursing home buildings. Such resources will enable the nursing home providers to build better models of care that will strengthen the full continuum and meet consumer demands, market needs and the goals of the state's long term care plan.

The proposed investment of state and federal funds can help nursing home providers re-evaluate their current business models and if necessary, restructure, diversify, or redesign their services, buildings and campuses. Just as importantly, it will allow for the **modernization** of our nursing homes so that we can provide this necessary level of care within a design and service model that consumers are demanding. We also need to build an infrastructure of nursing home care that makes sense for our changing health care system. **Modernization efforts** will allow nursing homes to create both the models of care that are desired by consumers and the systems of care that will be required in the new landscape of health care reform. Greenhouse models, culture change modifications, energy efficiencies, electronic health records, transportation systems and other capital improvements should be allowable within the system of grants, loans and funding.

LeadingAge Connecticut continues to encourage the state to *strengthen* and *invest in* the long term care system and to provide the opportunity and environment for individual providers to transform our system of aging services one solution at a time. LeadingAge Connecticut proposes that through the rightsizing initiative, the state create a collaborative and efficient regulatory and reimbursement environment that is adaptive and receptive to individual provider's forward thinking ideas and planning. Such an environment would encourage providers of the long term care continuum to adjust, modernize and diversify their models of care to address current and future consumer needs and expectations. ***The time is now to look toward innovative solutions and begin to create the future of aging services.***

Home Modifications

LeadingAge Connecticut supports the proposed bonding to fund home modifications that will allow individuals to remain in the community and in their own homes. Initiatives such as this reinforce the need to view long term care as not just skilled nursing, but as a full continuum of services and supports that begins in one's own home.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide this testimony and I would be happy to answer any questions.

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