



CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF NUTRITION AND AGING SERVICE PROVIDERS

Connecticut Association of Nutrition and Aging Service Providers

Testimony to the Human Services Committee

**In Regards to H.B. No. 5482 AA EXPANDING THE CONGREGATE MEALS
PROGRAM FOR THE ELDERLY**

Senator Musto, Representative Tercyak and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Joel Sekorski and I thank you for this opportunity to offer comments on HB 5492 An Act Expanding the Congregate Meals Program for the Elderly. The Connecticut Association of Nutrition and Aging Service Providers (CANASP), known more commonly as the Elderly Nutrition Programs, provide home delivered and congregate meals to elderly individuals statewide.

As members of the Human Services Committee, I know you are well aware of the complexity involved in receiving services as a person ages, and we know that services provided to help aging individuals remain in the comfort of their own homes are of utmost importance. Elderly Nutrition Programs are one of the most basic services to be provided at low cost and the benefits of this program are monumental. Elderly Nutrition Programs not only provide the more obvious benefit of daily nutritional meals, but they are a key element in helping to prevent premature institutionalization. Elderly Nutrition Programs help to prevent or prolong the more costly options within the long term care system such as hospitalizations, nursing home care, or home based nursing care. Congregate meals provide an added benefit with the socialization that comes with eating at a community site surrounded by other people.

CANASP supports all efforts to expand Elderly Nutrition Programs, however we would like to emphasize that requiring congregate sites to serve meals for an additional day must come with funding. Our programs are struggling to fund the meals we need to serve as it is now, and a number of congregate sites have had to reduce the number of days meals are served and close some sites due to budget constraints. While we would love to serve more, we would be unable to fund an additional day of meals without the financial support of the state. Therefore, section two of this bill is crucial. The funding stream for Elderly Nutrition Programs is complicated and at times inconsistent. We rely on both federal and state funding, as well as private donations and suggested client contributions for meals delivered. As you know, the state has essentially flat funded our programs for many years now. While we recognize flat funding is better than a cut, it remains difficult because our private donations and client contributions have decreased and our costs to administer the program have gone up. The price of gas and food continues to rise, and that can provide for a stressful environment when operating under a flat funding stream. CANASP is continuously working to find creative ways of bringing in money, such as looking at legislation to add a donation check off box on state income tax filing forms, and working with local grocery stores to participate in the "buy a wheel" program.

CANASP would like to thank the committee for raising a bill which recognizes the importance of Elderly Nutrition Programs. We would be happy to work with the committee to offer any more information or ideas you might need to ensure this program can continue to provide meals to as many individuals as possible.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Joel Sekorski
President, CANASP