



A nonpartisan research and public policy office of the Connecticut General Assembly

Testimony of

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Labor and Public Employees Committee
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Thank you for this opportunity to comment on a number of bills before you today.

As you know, the Connecticut Commission on Aging is the nonpartisan state agency devoted to preparing Connecticut for a significantly changed demographic and enhancing the lives of the present and future generations of older adults. For almost twenty years, the Commission has served as an effective leader in statewide efforts to promote choice, independence and dignity for Connecticut's older adults and persons with disabilities.

In these difficult budget times, research-based initiatives, statewide planning efforts, vision and creative thinking are all needed. The Connecticut Commission on Aging stands ready to assist our state in finding solutions to our fiscal problems, while keeping commitments to critical programs and services.

HB 5433: An Act Creating a Procedure for Personal Care Attendants to Collectively Bargain with the State

~ CoA Informs

The CoA has been a leader in direct care workforce development planning and serves as chair and manager of the Money Follows the Person Direct Care Workforce Subcommittee. Over the past several years, the CoA has brought together a broad group of stakeholders including: consumers, national experts and leaders across the long-term care continuum, community college system, the workforce system and at times the unions to develop a strategic plan to address the needs of the people of our state and of the community-based long-term services and supports system.

Developing the direct care workforce is of critical importance and warrants our immediate attention. Two major factors are contributing to its urgency, 1) growing demand as a result of dramatically changing demographics and 2) the major movement to provide services and supports in one's community vs. an institutional setting.

Connecticut is the 7th oldest state in the nation and still aging dramatically. Between 2006 – 2030, the 65 plus population will increase by 64% while the working age population (those aged 18-64) will decline by 2% and further challenge system.

At the same time, where and how we provide long-term services and supports (LTSS) is changing rapidly. Historically, CT has been institutionally biased. Major initiatives are underway to help achieve Connecticut's goal (as set forth in the state LTC Plan) that by 2025 we will serve 75% of the people in their home or community and 25% in institutions. (CT is presently serving 53% of individuals in the community and 47% in institutions.) This rebalancing goal will not be achieved without a coordinated approach to recruit, train, retain and support paid and unpaid caregivers.

As a result of the population aging and the rebalancing movement, home health aides and personal care aides will see the largest occupational growth in the field between 2008 and 2018. Latest data from the MFP demonstration indicate the state will need **9,000 more paid direct-care workers in the next 5 years.**

The CoA has been following the work of the Personal Care Attendant Quality Home Care Workforce Council as unionization of the Personal Care Attendant workforce has the potential

to significantly impact the home and community-based system. Certainly, increased wages and access to benefits are primary concerns for the workforce investment system and of workers in general. Lack of attention to these expressed needs of the workers makes recruiting 9,000 workers an almost impossible task.

However, one must weigh the good with the potential harm unionization may cause to consumers of care. A valid and real concern of many consumers is that upon raising the hourly rate of the personal care attendants their hours of service will be reduced. If the care plan cost caps are not raised and the hourly rate or wage of the PCA is increased, the number of service hours will have to decrease or else the consumer may go over the cost cap. The unions that are involved have consistently stated their commitment to safeguarding service hours. **The CoA, therefore strongly recommends that if this bill moves forward it be amended to address the caps.**

The CoA welcomes the opportunity to work with this committee to find a way to protect the consumers, while allowing for increased wages for Personal Care Attendants. Thank you.

