



Testimony of Byron Peterson, AARP CT Executive Council Member
Committee on Aging
February 5, 2013

Good Morning Chairman Serra, Ayala, Ranking Members Kelly and Adinolfi and members of the Aging Committee. My name is Byron Peterson; I am an AARP advocacy volunteer from Shelton and member of the AARP Connecticut Executive Council. On behalf of the nearly 600,000 members of AARP in Connecticut, I'd like to express our strong support for public policy that allows older residents to access long-term services and supports in the setting of their choice. That includes a commitment to adequately fund the state-funded Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders and the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program, as well as adequate asset protections for a healthy spouse to remain independent in the community and continue to live in their own home, while the other spouse is receiving Medicaid services in a nursing facility.

You have AARP's written testimony on Raised Bill No. 520, Raised H.B. No. 5757, and 5765, but I would like to add a personal perspective on the need for respite care for informal family caregivers.

About 10 years ago, shortly after his retirement, a friend informed me that his wife had just received a diagnosis of having an Alzheimer Neurological disorder. However, they decided that they would continue with the activities they had planned to do after his retirement that included spending their summers at their cabin on a lake, travel, visiting with their grandchildren and remain active with their personal interests. In fact in retirement he became a deacon in his church and a Chaplin at a local hospital counseling families as needed. His wife remained active in her various women's groups and in her church choir. Over the years friends and family helped them both in adjusting to physical and mental changes. However, despite her strong will her physical and mental

condition began to deteriorate and required more of his time as her primary caregiver. Her memory has become more inconsistent and physically she became more unstable. It was unsafe to leave her alone at home due to her physical instability and her memory lapses. He took on more of the household chores such as shopping, cooking, laundry, etc. since these tasks were becoming more difficult for her. As a fellow member of the choir I was one of those who drove her home after choir practice. I have a personal view of seeing the negative effects on her both physically and mentally. But, when I brought her home I saw how he was glad to see her **and more importantly how he had been rejuvenated by having a few hours for himself.** Just recently she had to give up singing in the choir since it was becoming more difficult for her to concentrate on the music. While this was a loss for her it was, for her caregiver, a loss of time for himself.

Despite these difficulties and the fact that he will need to be with her even more they both have decided that she will stay home versus going to an institution such as nursing home. We have talked about Home care and Respite care to make his life a little easier and to keep some variety in her life. However, when we went on line to investigate Respite care opportunities with an Agency on Aging office we got the message **“that due to financial constraints applications for the program were not being accepted.”**

This caregiver is one of an estimated 711,000 family caregivers in Connecticut who have given 465 million hours of unpaid care valued at approximately \$5.8 Billion. For this caregiver and others in our state I personally ask for your support and commitment to adequately fund the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders and the Alzheimer’s Respite Care Program. THANK YOU!

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