



Testimony to the Aging Committee

Presented by Mag Morelli, President, LeadingAge Connecticut

February 26, 2013

Regarding

- **Senate Bill 837, An Act Concerning The Department On Aging**
- **Senate Bill 882, An Act Concerning Adding The PACE Program To The Medicaid State Plan**
- **Senate Bill 886, An Act Concerning Aging In Place**
- **Senate Bill 936, An Act Concerning Streamlining Approval For Nursing Homes To Shelter Displaced Residents**
- **Senate Bill 937, An Act Concerning Care For Elderly Persons In A Home Setting Rather Than A Nursing Home Facility**
- **Senate Bill 6395, An Act Concerning The Expansion Of A Small House Nursing Home Pilot Program**
- **Senate Bill 6396, An Act Concerning Livable Communities**
- **Senate Bill 6461, An Act Concerning Presumptive Medicaid Eligibility For The Connecticut Home-Care Program For The Elderly**
- **Senate Bill 6462, An Act Concerning A Pilot Program To Expand The Duties Of The State Long-Term Care Ombudsman**

Good morning Senator Ayala, Representative Serra, and members of the Aging 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 senior housing.

Our members are sponsored by religious, fraternal, community, and governmental 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 on several of the bills that are before you today and offer the Committee our assistance as you consider these various issues.

Senate Bill 837, An Act Concerning The Department On Aging

LeadingAge Connecticut will support the efforts of the Department on Aging and will offer our assistance and partnership to ensure it fulfills its stated mission. We have always worked closely with the Department of Social Service on these issues and we will continue to work with the Department of Social Services on funding issues, the rebalancing initiatives and the other issues related to long term services and supports that will remain in that Department.

We do not, however, believe that the Commission on Aging should be eliminated. The rapid aging of our state will require more, not less resources and we view the Commission on Aging as being an asset and a complement to the new Department on Aging. The Commission was established to promote public policy that embraces best practices, national trends and statewide needs on issues such as senior housing, health care, long term care, and transportation. The Commission does just that with the guidance and insight of a representative volunteer board that provides knowledge, expertise, and an informed policy perspective. They are a valuable resource that must be maintained at this critical time in our state's history.

Senate Bill 882, An Act Concerning Adding The PACE Program To The Medicaid State Plan

Connecticut has undertaken a dramatic systems change in long term care. This change is being implemented through several Medicaid initiatives, including a strategic rebalancing plan that will allow more people the opportunity to receive services and supports in community based settings. The rebalancing plan declares that the State of Connecticut is "committed to creating a more efficient and effective long-term services and supports system aligned with the principles of choice, autonomy and dignity."

We strongly support Senate Bill 882 which that would provide the opportunity to offer the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) program in Connecticut and enhance the choices made available to consumers seeking long term services and supports through the Medicaid program.

PACE is a true community based provider care model that provides comprehensive, fully-integrated care. The focus in a PACE program is on wellness and prevention and avoiding unnecessary care. This is exactly the model of care that the State is seeking for our older adults who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid. Thirty-one other states have successful PACE programs, including Massachusetts, and we have high quality, non-profit aging service providers in Connecticut that would be interested in developing this nationally acclaimed model of care if allowed to do so. We encourage the Committee to support this legislation and expand the options that can be made available

to older adults who are living in the community and in need of nursing home level of care.

Senate Bill 886, An Act Concerning Aging In Place

The Task Force to Study Aging in Place (established through Special Act 12-6) submitted a final report that contained several recommendations, many of which are included in this proposed bill. We commend the task force for their work and support the proposed legislation. We do recommend that the Committee keep in mind that the move toward community based services will require a strong system of communication between the State and the community based providers that consumers will be relying on as they age in place. Many caregivers will be unlicensed and therefore the traditional methods of communicating information will not be sufficient and new methods will need to be developed and implemented. We raise this in relation to this bill because it proposes new reporting and training requirements for an expanded group of community based providers and caregivers.

Senate Bill 936, An Act Concerning Streamlining Approval For Nursing Homes To Shelter Displaced Residents

LeadingAge Connecticut appreciates the Committee raising this bill as it provides us the opportunity to discuss the emergency preparedness work that has been done by nursing homes throughout the state.

Connecticut has developed a *Long Term Care Mutual Aid Plan for Evacuation and Resource/Asset Support* in four of the five regions of the state. This plan has been developed in collaboration with the Department of Public Health and it allows nursing homes to “surge” above licensed capacity if there is a need for one nursing home to temporarily evacuate residents to other nursing homes in emergency situations. The plan also has a communication and reporting process that allows us to know the status of all the nursing homes in a region during an emergency situation. This Mutual Aid Plan started in Region 3 and proved to be invaluable during the weather and power emergencies over the last two years. Now expanded to three additional regions, we would strongly support the complete expansion of the plan to the fifth and region.

During emergency situations, the Department of Public Health has the ability to issue various waivers of regulation that assist in our emergency efforts. These can either be in conjunction with the Mutual Aid Plan or they can be in response to an urgent need. We have appreciated the collaborative and responsive actions of the Department and will continue to work closely with them as we continuously improve our preparedness planning.

One next step in emergency scenario planning that we have been discussing has been the potential to use a designated section of a nursing home as an *emergency alternate care site shelter* for at risk individuals brought in from the community during an emergency. In such a scenario, a designated section of the nursing home would become a shelter, not a nursing home. This way the nursing home would not need to actually admit the

individuals as nursing home residents. The lengthy admissions process would be avoided and the individual would not need to become an actual nursing home resident. A nursing home would need to plan ahead for such situations and work with their community's emergency management director to develop a mutual understanding regarding the level of care that that could be provided and the type of information and resources that would be needed when a shelter scenario is implemented. We are currently working with the Department to advance this concept.

We thank you again for raising this bill and look forward to working with the Committee and the Department of Public Health to advance our emergency preparedness planning.

Senate Bill 937, An Act Concerning Care For Elderly Persons In A Home Setting Rather Than A Nursing Home Facility

Connecticut has already begun the process of a dramatic systems change in long term care services and supports. This change is being implemented through several Medicaid initiatives, including a strategic rebalancing plan that will allow more people the opportunity to receive services and supports in community based settings. The rebalancing plan declares that the State of Connecticut is "committed to creating a more efficient and effective long-term services and supports system aligned with the principles of choice, autonomy and dignity" and creates a plan to rebalance the system by 2025.

The Connecticut Strategic Rebalancing Plan was developed with extensive input from stakeholders and includes a 725 page report of projections of long-term services and supports needs for Connecticut, including specific data by municipality, statewide level, and labor market groupings. We have included the links to these recently released documents for the Committee's information.

- [State of Connecticut Strategic Rebalancing Plan: A Plan to Rebalance Long Term Services and Supports 2013-2015](#)
- [Strategic Rebalancing Plan's projections of long-term services and supports needs for Connecticut, including specific data by municipality, statewide level, and labor market groupings.](#) Please note that page 28 (appendix A) contains a state map. To facilitate easy navigation to a specific city/town, place your mouse over the town name on the map and click.

Senate Bill 6395, An Act Concerning The Expansion Of A Small House Nursing Home Pilot Program

As the State moves forward to redesign and rebalance our system of long term care, it is the perfect time to expand the opportunity to develop small house nursing homes. The small house nursing home is specifically designed to be resident centered and it creates the modern day nursing home environment that consumers are demanding and that the State is encouraging. Sometimes known as the "Green House" nursing home, this model is in great demand across the country. We strongly support this bill which would advance this model of nursing home care and expand the possibilities of aging in Connecticut.

As we have stated earlier in our testimony, Connecticut has initiated a long term services and supports rebalancing strategic plan that includes resources to assist in the repurposing, modernizing and/or downsizing of existing nursing home facilities. Many of the nursing homes in our state have an outdated physical plant design as a result of our long standing nursing home moratorium. It is important that we move to *modernize* the nursing homes that will fit within the strategic plan so that we can create a modern-day nursing home environment that will meet consumer demand and market need. That is why we support the expansion of the small house nursing home pilot program.

Senate Bill 6396, An Act Concerning Livable Communities

The State's Strategic Rebalancing Plan encourages aging services providers to work with their community leaders to address the aging service needs of that community. We support this legislation which would offer municipalities a source of additional information and resources to help plan and meet the needs of their aging residents.

Senate Bill 6461, An Act Concerning Presumptive Medicaid Eligibility For The Connecticut Home-Care Program For The Elderly

LeadingAge Connecticut urges immediate action to address the pending Medicaid eligibility problems that are negatively affecting both the access to care for the elderly and the financial stability of the providers of long term care services and supports.

We support Senate Bill 6461 which would immediately address the pending eligibility crisis in the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders. The delay in processing the long term care Medicaid applications for this segment of our vulnerable elderly population is preventing individuals in the community from receiving needed services in a timely manner and placing them at risk. We strongly support a resolution to this situation and encourage the Committee to support this bill.

Senate Bill 6462, An Act Concerning A Pilot Program To Expand The Duties Of The State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

LeadingAge Connecticut would be pleased to assist the State Ombudsman and the Commission on Aging in developing a plan to establish a pilot program to expand the State Ombudsman's oversight to home and community based care recipients.

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

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