Arthur Oakes III "Chuck", CAPS
60 Cinnamon Springs
South Windsor, Connecticut 06074
(860) 644-1128

**Testimony to the General Assembly's Appropriations Committee**
**Supporting the Connecticut Commission on Aging**
**February 19, 2013: Bill No. 6350**

I implore you today, as a long-time caregiver for my parents (now-deceased) and advocate for seniors and their families, to reject Gov. Malloy's misguided recommendation to eliminate the Connecticut Commission on Aging. I will quickly add that this important agency is the Legislature's Commission on Aging, an independent, non-partisan research and public policy agency that is perhaps one of our state's most valuable resources at a time when our older adult population is soaring. I also oppose the governor's recommendation to consolidate the other legislative commissions within the Legislative Branch.

It is my personal appeal that you fully support the Connecticut Commission on Aging by ensuring that it be allowed to continue doing the important work it has been doing since it was created by the General Assembly in 1993.

Elimination of the Commission—indeed any reduction in its already modest budget or three-person professional staff-- would be a fiscally and morally irresponsible reaction to the state's financial difficulties that could harm our rapidly growing aging population and their families. The Commission serves an extremely important **oversight role**, providing for accountability within all levels of state government. As you may know, a few years ago the Commission on Aging identified $11 million in untapped federal funds that flowed into Connecticut. This accomplishment alone—just one of many—returns millions of dollars more to the state than the Commission's tiny budget of $240,000--.00001% of the overall state budget-- costs taxpayers. The Commission has also recommended ways to streamline the

state's delivery of long-term services and supports under Medicaid that could save our state nearly $1 billion every year. It has also played a key role as both an architect of the much-acclaimed Money Follows the Person program and leader of federally-mandated committees that will ensure the program's success. Ironically, Gov. Malloy fully supports Money Follows the Person as a model state program. How, then, can he recommend elimination of the small, flexible and highly efficient agency that has contributed so much to its success and will continue to do so?

Through its research work, the Commission has made concrete and actionable recommendations to the General Assembly that can save Connecticut hundreds of millions of dollars annually in Medicaid long-term care costs alone. Clearly, this is an agency that knows the meaning of "return-on-investment." One need only review the Commission on Aging's annual "Results-Based Accountability Report" to learn first-hand about the effectiveness of its work.

My introduction to the Commission began some nine years ago when my parents decided to remain in the West Hartford home where I grew up. As a son trying to do the right thing, I made it my business to learn about *retiring at home* and local resources. My journey had begun as caregiver and advocate.

In my quest to make our "homestead" safe, secure and senior-friendly, modifications and enhancements were made to the house, making it more supportive for ***aging in place***. I soon wrote a book about my experiences, **MAKING YOUR HOME SENIOR-FRIENDLY** and began speaking about the virtues of ***aging in place***. With the support and encouragement of the Commission, I became a **Certified Aging in Place Specialist** and began writing for national publications and websites. I am very encouraged that the Commission is continuing with this important work through its recently launched "Livable Communities for All Ages" initiative. I hope you will all support this work as well.

During the past nine years, I learned many things about ***aging in place*** and ***aging with dignity***. I learned my own limitations and the need to recruit, hire and manage professional homecare workers to support my parents, since I did not live with them. I soon found there were many practices and policies that did not support aging in place. The Commission introduced me to several influential legislators with whom I met and developed a productive relationship.

Speaking from my own experience, The Commission on Aging has always been a consistent and helpful source of information, policies and resources and to not fully support its ongoing work and by allowing it to **continue in its important work** would not be supportive for our aging population and their families.

So after several years of support from the Commission and others, I became a member of two committees at the United Nations and I

am working to improve the ***quality of life*** for our seniors as they strive to "age in place" with grace and dignity.

**In closing**, this is no time to make unwise decisions at the state Capitol. I urge the legislature to fully support the Commission on Aging.

Thank you for this opportunity to be heard.

---

***The true test of one's character is not how long the journey is, but rather how the potholes and detours were navigated along the way!***