alzheimer's association®

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Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing
Friday, February 22, 2013

Senator Harp and Rep. Walker and distinguished members of the committee, please accept this written testimony on behalf of the Alzheimer's Association, CT Chapter (The Association) in regards to ***H.B. 6350 An Act Concerning the Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2015.***

The Alzheimer's Association is a donor supported, non-profit organization serving the needs of families, health care professionals and those individuals who are affected with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The Association provides information and resources, support groups, education and training, and a 24 hour, 7 day a week Helpline.

We appreciate your support of the Alzheimer's Statewide Respite program and request that funding be maintained for this essential community-based program that provides much needed relief for exhausted and stressed caregivers. Family caregivers provide most of the care for individuals with dementia so they can remain at home for much longer than would otherwise be possible, delaying costly skilled nursing facility care and thereby potentially saving state Medicaid dollars.

In Connecticut, there are over 70,000 citizens with Alzheimer's or other related dementia. [i] This is projected to escalate rapidly in coming years as the baby boomer generation ages.

There are more than 174,000 caregivers, usually family members who provide unpaid care for someone with the disease, often compromising their own health. Alzheimer's and Dementia caregivers provide over $2.4 billion in uncompensated services and endure significant emotional, physical and mental stress, multiplying the overall cost of the disease. [ii] Sixty-one percent of caregivers for people with Alzheimer's or other dementia rate the emotional stress of caregiving as high or very high, and are more than twice as likely as caregivers of people without these conditions to say the greatest difficulty associated with caregiving is that it creates or aggravates health problems. [iii]

Alzheimer's also places significant financial burdens on families and businesses. Businesses lose billions a year in lost productivity and replacement expenses for

employees who miss work or quit to care for a relative, according to the National Institute on Aging. The task of caring for a person with dementia is overwhelming. An occasional break allows an exhausted caregiver to regroup, both physically and emotionally, and to find the strength to carry on.

Alzheimer patients are most at risk of nursing home transition. This has significant financial implications for state budgets. Average per person Medicaid payments for Medicare beneficiaries with Alzheimer's and other dementias are nineteen times as great as average Medicaid payments for Medicare beneficiaries without the disease.[iv] In sum, individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are high users of health care, long-term care and hospice services.

The Alzheimer's Statewide Respite Program

Since its inception, the Statewide Respite Care Program has continued to be a success and provides the resources to a caregiver to establish an effective care plan developed for an individual with dementia, and allows the family caregiver much needed periods of respite to care for their loved-ones. Family and other unpaid caregivers often must reduce their hours of work or even quit their jobs, resulting in a loss of job-related income and benefits.

Eligible families may apply for daytime or overnight respite care services that may include: Adult day care, cognitive fitness training, home health aide, homemaker, companion, personal care assistants, skilled nursing care or short term nursing care.

In FY'2012, the services of 550 consumers were recertified and 839 individuals received direct services such as adult day care and home health care. Furthermore, outcome measures demonstrate a high level of satisfaction from program participants, while the changing needs of families continue to demand interventions on the part of care managers to accommodate variable family dynamics and service needs. Statewide Respite Program services were beneficial in assisting the client in remaining at home during some portion of the program year in 93% of client cases. In 84% of the cases, the care recipient was able to remain at home for the entire program year, and the program was effective in improving the caregivers and client's quality of life and reducing caregiver stress in 89% of the cases.

In conclusion, Alzheimer's disease has profound implications for future state budgets. People with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias use state dollars to pay for their health care, especially long-term care. About half of all Medicaid beneficiaries with Alzheimer's or another dementia are nursing home residents. Among nursing home residents with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, just over half rely on Medicaid to help pay for their nursing home care.

While only 7% of the Medicaid population receives long-term services and supports, 61% ($2.863 billion) of the FY '12 state budget Medicaid expenditures of $4.714 billion, were made on the behalf of long-term care beneficiaries.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of maintaining funding for this vital program. Please feel free to contact me at ljulian@alz.org., or (860) 828-2828.

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[i] 2012 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report at alz.org/facts.
[ii] 2012 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report at alz.org/facts.
[iii] The Council of State Governments, Alzheimer's Disease and Caregiving, Sept 2011.
[iv] 2012 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report at alz.org/facts.