



Real Possibilities

AARP Testimony in Support of Long-term Care Rebalancing, state-funded Connecticut Home Care Programs for Elders and Alzheimer's Respite Care

Appropriations Committee

Feb. 22, 2013

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of more than 37 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment security and retirement planning. A major priority for AARP is ensuring people 50+ are able to find the care they and their family members need, when they want it and in the setting of their choice.

That's why AARP urges the General Assembly to: (1) maintain funding for venerable state programs such as the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders and Alzheimer's Respite Care, which support informal family caregiving and avoid premature nursing home placement; and (2) expand investments in home and community based alternatives to institutional care as outlined in Governor Malloy's Strategic Rebalancing Plan (*Strategic Rebalancing Plan: A Plan to Rebalance Long Term Services and Supports – 2013 – 2015*). This plan build on bipartisan support for home and community based options that allow consumers to receive care in the most appropriate, least restrictive setting they choose.

Individuals with long-term care needs often rely on others to provide help with routine tasks. For these individuals, limiting the choice of who provides those services and where they receive care can result in a profound loss of independence. The vast majority (89%) of Americans age 50+ prefer to live in their homes and communities as long as they can. Unfortunately, the state's overreliance on institutional care doesn't properly reflect those consumer preferences. We believe that rebalancing our system to serve more individuals in less costly and preferred community-based alternatives will result in greater efficiencies and better health outcomes.

AARP strongly supports Governor Malloy's proposals to increase funding for nursing home "right-sizing," expand home modifications for people moving back to the community under Money Follows the Person, and close long-term care service gaps. Beyond these critical investments Connecticut must also continue to adequately fund cost-effective programs like the state-funded Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders (CHCPE) and Alzheimer's Respite Care. Both programs have proven successful in helping older residents avoid premature nursing home placement. By leveraging cost-effective community supports, the CHCPE can serve an average senior in their community at about one third the cost of institutional care under Medicaid. Similarly, the Alzheimer's Respite Care program provides overburdened caregivers with small grants to help pay for services such as adult day care, in-home care and short-term inpatient respite care. The program is vital to supporting unpaid family caregivers—the backbone of our long-term care system.

In Connecticut, an estimated 711,000 family caregivers provided 465 million hours of care to an adult with limitation in daily activities during 2009. The estimated economic value of this unpaid contribution was approximately \$5.8 billion. Respite services available under the Alzheimer's Respite Care program provide the temporary reprieve caregivers need to reduce stress and prevent burn-out. In turn, these caregivers can continue to provide free informal support to a loved one aging independently in the community.

We are committed to working with legislators and the Administration to maintain funding for state-funded home and community based programs and implementing recommendations in the Governor's Strategic Rebalancing Plan. Serving people at home, when it is preferred and safe, is not just good public policy, it's a fiscal imperative.

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