

Appropriations Committee  
Public Hearing March 22, 2013  
**HB 6354, Section 90 - OPPOSE**

Oppose the Elimination of the legislative Commission on Aging

Submitted: Sherry Ostrout, Hartford CT

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee, I am writing to express my opposition to the Governor's proposal to eliminate the legislative Commission on Aging found within HB 6350. Connecticut can not afford to lose the dedicated focus and strategic guidance that would result from the elimination of this Commission.

Having worked at Connecticut Community Care, Inc. (CCCI) for close to 20 years serving older adults who are most at risk for nursing home placement it is evident in practice and on paper that we are already seeing the growing demand for long term services and supports; a growing need that is sure to exceed current capacity. CT's aging population is growing by leaps and bounds at the same time the younger population is decreasing. From 2006-2030, the older adult population will increase by 64%. We are challenged by the rising expenditures of Medicaid and State dollars on health and long term care supports. This challenge is persistent and growing.

The legislative Commission on Aging has been THE trusted, non-partisan, singularly focused research, analysis and policy guidance entity in CT. The Commission's work and guidance to the legislature and on behalf of the legislature is an invaluable resource to decision-makers across the state and, despite the Governor's proposal for elimination, widely used within state government. In fact, if you look at the footnote of any substantive report on CT aging policy – you will see the work of the Commission on Aging.

The Commission's role within the community is one of educator, trusted collaborator and unbiased facilitator often creating bridges of communication that have not naturally occurred. Including among providers, advocates and government agencies. This role can not be understated. As one example, the Commission has brought together philanthropy, municipal elected officials and employees, legislators and the executive branch program leaders such as Money Follows the Person to build knowledge and momentum towards livable communities for all ages. In a state with 169 independently governed towns and cities, with unique charm, culture and politics – this is a challenge – the Commission is continuing this statewide conversation at the local levels and communities are responding.

The Commission on Aging also serves as the impartial facilitator for the Money Follows the Person public stakeholder advisory group. Money Follows the Person is the largest systems change project in CT's history that is shifting focus, dollars, services and supports to a community long term care system from costly institutional care. As facilitator, the Commission

affirms the distinct roles and authority of the legislative branch and the executive branch of government, ensuring transparency, accountability and that public input remains meaningful.

And, with this shift to community care in a booming aging population, community personal care (homecare) workforce is inadequate to meet demand and the system is unprepared and fragmented. The Commission on Aging is the facilitator and chair of CT's Direct Care Workforce workgroup bringing together workforce development organizations, workforce investment boards, community colleges, consumers, employers and State Departments defining the problem and fostering collaborative solutions. The culmination of these efforts is CT's Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan. Aspects of this large scale initiative, led by the Commission, has been adopted within the Governor's budget recommendations.

The Legislative Commission on Aging has saved the state millions of dollars through their sound policy guidance and recommendations. If they have failed at anything, it is self-promotion. If the CT Commission on Aging is eliminated – the loss of this unique leadership of office, impartiality and dedicated focus will be profound. I ask that you show your support for this vital legislative office and oppose the Governor's recommendation.

c. Senator Eric Coleman; Representative Matthew Ritter