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For the Appropriations Committee of the CT General Assembly
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**Testimony Regarding the Governor's Proposal to Eliminate the CT Commission on Aging**
Bill No. 6350

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to the Appropriations Committee regarding the Governor's recommendation to eliminate the state Commission on Aging and to consolidate the other five legislative commissions.

I find both recommendations entirely inappropriate. However, I am particularly appalled that the governor would even consider eliminating the Commission on Aging—the Legislature's non-partisan, independent research and public policy agency for all issues affecting Connecticut's burgeoning population of older adults.

I served on the Commission on Aging's unpaid volunteer Board for several years and was proud to also serve as its secretary. I am the retired director of Elderly Services for the City of New Haven and remain very active in helping the city deal with issues affecting older adults.

I also stay in close touch with the highly professional three-person staff of the Commission on Aging. One need only scan the Commission's annual Results-Based Accountability report—produced as mandated by the General Assembly—to learn first-hand of the agency's no-nonsense, evidence-based approach to its work. If only all state agencies could be as productive and efficient.

In recommending elimination of the Commission on Aging, the governor has noted the Jan. 1 re-establishment of the state Department on Aging, which is an Executive Branch agency. In doing so, he infers that the Commission on Aging's work is somehow redundant. This rationale simply makes no sense.

Anyone who understands the difference between Executive Branch and Legislative Branch agencies—particularly in the case of the Commission on Aging—knows there is no redundancy.

The CoA is an independent agency of the General Assembly. In its work, it is independent in providing oversight over Executive Branch programs, budgets and policies. Its autonomy vis-à-vis agencies which report to the Governor allows it to provide members of the General Assembly with the information needed to make important decisions that affect constituents' well-being and the state's fiscal health.

The Legislature created the CoA two decades ago and has been well served by it ever since. (The question of whether the state needs or can afford a new Executive Branch agency such as the Department on Aging is one the Appropriations Committee may wish to pursue separately.)

Here are just some of the ways I believe the Commission on Aging continues to serve our state:

--The Commission is the only office in state government responsible for studying and providing research on all matters concerning our state's burgeoning population of older adults:

--The Commission on Aging prepares our state for this dramatically changed demographic by studying and monitoring complex issues that affect a million baby boomers, older adults and persons of all ages with disabilities.

--With only three professional staff (supported by a 21-member, unpaid, volunteer Board from throughout the state), the Commission is an extremely low-cost legislative office that provides oversight, checks and balances which are critical to state government.

--Support of the Legislature's Commission on Aging affirms the distinct roles and authority of the Legislative and Executive branches of government.

--The Commission on Aging saves the state money. Through its work the Commission—whose total budget is only $240,000 or .00001% of the state budget-- and the other Legislative Commissions have brought millions of dollars into the state—far more than their costs.

--As clearly evidenced in its Results-Based Accountability report, the Commission on Aging has offered cost –saving solutions over 13% of the state budget, particularly affecting people using Medicaid long-term services and supports.

There is much more than could be said about the effectiveness and efficacy of the Commission on Aging's work and its value to the General Assembly, our state government and the people of Connecticut. I have seen this work first-hand and know what a tremendous asset this small, flexible and efficient operation is to our state.

Please reject the Governor's recommendation and allow the Commission on Aging to continue its critically important work.

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