Written Testimony to the Appropriations Committee regarding H.B. 6350 ***AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2015, AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING TO REVENUE***

Section 11 –Proposes to eliminate the Commission on Aging

Recommended Action: Reject

February 19, 2013

Submitted by Christy Kovel, Member of the Commission on Aging

My name is Christy Kovel and I am a Middletown resident and an appointed volunteer (unpaid and uncompensated) Board member of the Connecticut Commission on Aging. I am here today to urge you to support and maintain funding for the Commission on Aging (CoA), an independent, non-partisan research and public policy agency in the legislative branch. Section 11 of H.B. 6350 proposes to eliminate the CoA and to consolidate five other commissions into a new agency called the Commission on Citizen Advocacy. I urge you to reject this proposal.

I have worked in the healthcare field for over twenty years, focusing on improving the lives of older adults, both in long-term care and community settings. Connecticut is currently the 7th oldest state in the nation and our population of 65+ is projected to grow by 64% from 2006-2030. The Legislative Commission on Aging (CoA) is the **only** office in state government charged to study and provide research on all matters concerning the growing population of older adults in CT. As a nonpartisan, public policy and research office of the CGA, the CoA serves as staff to the legislature, as a leader in the field and as a catalyst for data-driven policy change. As an example, the CoA provides staff oversight on the implementation of Money Follows the Person (MFP), a federal demonstration program designed to help states rebalance their long-term care systems to better support people living in institutions who want instead to live in the community. CoA's oversight to this and numerous other initiatives directly relates to one of the largest components of the state budget-Medicaid (representing 13% of the overall state budget).

I recognize the enormous budget challenges that our state is facing during this legislative session. The CoA has an extremely modest budget (.0001% of the state budget) of about $240,000 in fy 13 with a professional staff of 3. Their role as a research and public policy office of the CT General Assembly provides valuable recommendations towards systems change that need to happen as the aging population continues to grow. There is much work ahead in the formation of a long-term care system that is both financially sustainable and provides true consumer choice. The CoA is the only commission dedicated to supporting this work and eliminating it would be a detriment to the growing older adult population in the state.

Again, I ask that you reject any proposal to eliminate the Commission on Aging or to consolidate the other legislative commissions.

Thank you for your consideration.