Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
2/19/13
Testimony in Opposition to the Elimination of the Legislative Commission on Aging
Dianne Stone, Newington Senior and Disabled Center

HB 6350, Section 11 - OPPOSE

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and esteemed Members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Dianne Stone. I am the Director of the Newington Senior and Disabled Center and I am here today to express strong support for the Legislative Commission on Aging.

At this point you have heard from the Commission on Aging and from others about the incredible work that they do. The Commission on Aging has played a major role in virtually every initiative in this state that involves older adults. They have provided the leadership that has allowed our state to move forward with important initiatives like Money Follows the person and they continue to lead efforts to streamline Medicaid, saving the State millions of dollars. You have heard about how they provide the leadership and staffing in the State's efforts to deal with critical issues like the rights of grandparents and aging in place, creating a better Connecticut for all residents. You have heard about the research that they have done that has been the foundation for policy and for programs.

Tonight, I will give you my perspective. The Commission on Aging has been an invaluable support to municipal services. They have been the voice for our issues and a source of credible information and guidance. And now, as the older adult population is growing and more people are able to continue to live at home in our Towns and Cities, the Commission is leading the way toward creating livable communities. They are engaging philanthropy, business, state and local government in a way that we, as senior centers and municipal agents, simply cannot. And this work has just begun.

The Commission on Aging and the Department on Aging are not interchangeable. The legislative Commission on Aging provides us, and you, with expertise in public policy and research, the CoA serves as staff to the legislature, as a leader in the field of aging, and as a the voice of older people. Unlike the State Department on Aging, the CoA does not administer or provide direct services – and the State Department on Aging does not provide research, legislative policy leadership, or speak on behalf of older people. In Connecticut, we support both a legislative Commission on Children and Executive branch agencies including the new Office on Early Childhood, Department of Children and Families and the State Department of Education. Clearly it is recognized that the legislative agencies and the executive agencies serving children are not redundant. Our older adults deserve the same.

On behalf of the older adults in the Town of Newington I urge you not to target the Legislature's Commission on Aging for elimination but to ensure it continues as an independent agency representing older adults across our state.