LeadingAge Connecticut

Testimony to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Presented By Mag Morelli, President

March 4, 2013

In Support Of Senate Bill 842, An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State for Capital Improvements, Transportation and other Purposes

Good morning Senator Fonfara, Representative Widlitz, and members of the Committee. My name is Mag Morelli and I am the President of LeadingAge Connecticut, a membership organization representing over 130 mission-driven and not-for-profit provider organizations serving older adults across the continuum of long term care including housing for the elderly, home care and skilled nursing facilities. Our members are sponsored by religious, fraternal, community, and municipal organizations that are committed to providing quality care and services to their residents and clients. Our member organizations, many of which have served their communities for generations, are dedicated to expanding the world of possibilities for aging.

On behalf of LeadingAge Connecticut, I would like to testify in support of Senate Bill 842 and specifically in support of the Governor's continued commitment to housing development, including the expansion of congregate and elderly housing with services; his proposal to continue to assist in the restructuring, diversifying and/or downsizing of existing nursing homes as part of the long term care rightsizing effort; the proposed development of the new concept of adult family homes; and the additional grants-in-aid funding for accessible home modifications for persons transitioning from institutions to homes under the Money Follows the Person program.

Affordable Senior Housing with Services

There is a growing demand for affordable senior housing units across the state as demonstrated by the lengthy waiting lists being maintained by our elderly housing site members. The waiting lists are reflective of the success of our state's nationally praised model of providing affordable community based services to congregate and elderly housing residents. This model of bringing services to the affordable elderly housing sites has allowed older adults to age in place and remain in their housing units for a longer period of time. Unfortunately, the shortage of available units is thwarting efforts to provide other older adults with the same opportunity.

Linking affordable senior housing with services is one of the answers to our state's quest to balance the long term care system. Connecticut has already developed several nationally acclaimed models of housing with services including allowing assisted living services to be delivered within our state congregate and HUD 202 housing sites and the four pilot affordable assisted living demonstration sites. We have excellent models – we just need to develop more sites to make more units available. Governor Malloy's proposal to fund additional housing development would allow for the possible development of congregate and elderly housing and we support its passage.

The State's Long Term Care Rightsizing Initiative: Nursing Home Diversifying, Downsizing and /or Modernization

LeadingAge Connecticut is very pleased that the Governor has not abandoned the nursing home as Connecticut pursues its recently released rightsizing strategic plan for our long term care system. The nursing home is a very important element of the long term care continuum and we strongly support the Governor's initiative to provide the resources needed to assist in restructuring, diversifying and/or downsizing existing nursing home buildings.

The proposed additional investment of state and federal funds can help more nursing home providers re-evaluate their current business models and if necessary, restructure, diversify, or redesign their services, buildings and campuses. **Just as importantly, we would ask the state to expand the opportunity and allow the use of these funds to *modernize* the nursing homes that will remain within the strategic plan so that we can provide this necessary level of care within a design and service model that consumers are demanding.** Modernization efforts will allow nursing homes to create both the models of care that are desired by consumers and the systems of integrated care that will be required in the new landscape of health care reform. Greenhouse models, culture change modifications, energy efficiencies, electronic health records, transportation systems and other capital improvements should be allowable within the system of grants, loans and funding.

Home Modifications and Adult Family Homes

LeadingAge Connecticut supports the proposed additional $1 million in bonding to fund grants-in-aid for home modifications that will allow individuals who require a nursing home level of care to return to and remain in the community. We also support the $1 million in funding proposed for the development of adult family homes. This concept is new to the state and is very promising as a new model of care and possibly as an alternative use for existing nursing home or residential care home structures.

LeadingAge Connecticut continues to encourage the state to *strengthen* and *invest in* the long term care system and to provide the opportunity and environment for individual providers to transform our system of aging services one solution at a time. ***The time is now to look toward innovative solutions and begin to create the future of aging services.***

Thank you for this opportunity to provide this testimony and I would be happy to answer any questions.

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