



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE DEPARTMENT ON AGING

LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM
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HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Public Hearing

Thursday, February 14, 2013

Testimony of Nancy Shaffer, State Ombudsman

Good morning Senator Slossberg and Representative Abercrombie and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Nancy Shaffer and I am the State Long Term Care Ombudsman. As you know, the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is mandated by the Older American's Act and Connecticut General Statutes 17b-400 through 17b-406 to provide services to protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of the residents of long term care facilities. As the State Ombudsman it is my responsibility to facilitate public comment and represent the interests of residents in order to recommend changes to the laws, regulations, policies and actions which affect the resident's quality of life and care. On behalf of the 30,000 residents in Connecticut's skilled nursing facilities, residential care homes and managed residential communities, I would like to testify in regards to several bills that are before you today.

S.B. No. 93 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE COMMUNITY SPOUSE OF AN INSTITUTIONALIZED PERSON.

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program supports this proposal. The proposal underscores the goals and philosophy of the State of Connecticut to promote aging in place. Supporting the community spouse so that he or she will receive the maximum community spouse protected amount pursuant to federal regulations will likely bolster the community spouse's ability to remain in his or her home for as long as possible. In the long term this strategy makes good fiscal sense for the State and is good social policy in our ever aging State.

S.B. No. 851 (RAISED) AN ACT PROTECTING THE ASSETS OF THE SPOUSE OF AN INSTITUTIONALIZED MEDICAID RECIPIENT.

Similar to S.B. 93, S.B. 851 reflects the State's commitment to foster support of residents to age in place in their own home and community. The Ombudsman Program supports both of these proposals.

S.B. No. 852 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING NURSING HOME OVERSIGHT AND COMMUNITY-BASED PLACEMENTS.

This proposal updates current statute CGS 17b-339 with some technical changes, including recent name changes to provider associations. It also adds members to the Committee: the Long Term Care Ombudsman and two members appointed by the Governor. As CGS 17b-339 is revisited during the 2013 Legislative Session, it is also appropriate to consider adding the Commissioner of the Department on Aging or his/her designee to the membership. The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program and the State Unit on Aging are now a part of the Department on Aging and have responsibility to monitor the health, welfare and well-being of residents in facilities and provide services in community settings.

H.B. No. 6370 (RAISED) AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY FOR SUBSIDIZED ASSISTED LIVING.

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program supports the intent of this proposal. H.B. 6370, like other bills before you today, promotes aging in place for Connecticut residents by establishment of a demonstration project to provide subsidized assisted living services. The stated purpose of the proposal is to provide subsidized assisted living opportunities for persons with mental illness. The proposed statute states that the applicant is required to 1) be eligible for the Connecticut home care program for the elderly (CHCPE) or 2) be sixty-five years of age or older and eligible for the mental health waiver. Because the proposed language of the bill requires that applicants must be sixty-five years of age or older individuals with mental illness it excludes those individuals under the age of sixty-five, even though they may have mental illness and/or other disabilities which require the support of assisted living services. The Ombudsman Program supports a more inclusive approach to maintaining all individuals in the least restrictive setting.