



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## STATE DEPARTMENT ON AGING

### LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

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#### HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

#### PUBLIC HEARING

Tuesday, March 5, 2013

#### Testimony of

Nancy Shaffer, M.A.

State Ombudsman

Good morning Senator Slossberg, 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 nearly 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.

**RAISED BILL No. 1022, AN ACT CONCERNING PROVIDING INCENTIVES TO MEET LONG-TERM CARE GOALS.**

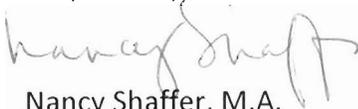
The Ombudsman Program supports the premise of this proposal which is to incentivize the modernization of Connecticut's nursing homes. It is not the role of the Ombudsman, however, to promote the loss of a resident's home, a nursing facility, as result of a voluntary closure. A closure of a nursing home is the most devastating occurrence for long term care residents, second only to incidences of neglect and abuse. Residents come to rely on their surroundings, their caregivers and the proximity to family members and friends. Transfer trauma can overwhelm residents and it can be devastating. Residents move into a particular nursing home for various personal reasons. Leaving that home involuntarily due to its closure is nothing short of an eviction and it comes at a time in a person's life when they are likely most frail and vulnerable. The Ombudsman Program would therefore be opposed to incentivizing a voluntary

closure of a facility. Many nursing homes in the State have already voluntarily reduced their bed capacity as a result of declining census. The Ombudsman Program supports this incentive to providers as it should not result in a disruption to a population of residents.

PROPOSED BILL No. 5984, AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSFER OF HOME CARE PATIENTS TO EMERGENCY SHELTERS OR NURSING HOME FACILITIES DURING A SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY.

Similar to another proposal before the General Assembly, S.B. No. 936, An Act Concerning Streamlining Approval for Nursing Homes to Shelter Displaced Residents, this proposal assures that individuals receiving care in their homes will be admitted to temporary emergency shelters or to nursing homes rather than to hospitals in the event of a severe weather emergency. Connecticut has ample experience with recent devastating weather events and has learned the detrimental impact to frail and vulnerable individuals when left without adequate shelter, medical care and life provisions. Many of our municipal agents have related stories about the individuals to whom they provided care during Storm Irene, Hurricane Sandy and our recent blizzard. They detail the inadequate care inherent to a setting not designed for providing for the significant needs of some individuals. Oxygen, medical treatments and medications, mobility and care issues all can become serious matters when trained caregivers and equipment are not available. It is important to admit individuals to the most appropriate setting, especially during a statewide emergency when hospital bed availability may be at a premium. The Ombudsman Program supports this legislative proposal.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy Shaffer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "N".

Nancy Shaffer, M.A.  
State Ombudsman