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**COMMITTEE ON AGING
IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL No. 5226
AN ACT INCREASING THE PERSONAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE
FEBRUARY 25, 2014**

I am the Director of Elder Law for Connecticut Legal Services, a non-profit legal aid agency. My testimony is submitted on behalf of CT's low income elderly clients who reside in nursing homes.

In 2011, the State of Connecticut reduced the personal needs allowance for nursing home residents on Medicaid from \$69 to \$60 per month. The State of Connecticut also eliminated the annual increase based on the cost of living index. The personal needs allowance is the small amount of money that nursing home residents are allowed to keep from their monthly income to cover non-Medicaid related expenses. The bulk of the nursing home resident's income is used to cover the costs of their nursing home care, or to cover other expenses permitted by the Connecticut Department of Social Services.

With this \$60.00 a month, a nursing home resident is responsible for paying for his or her clothes, visit to a hair dresser, mail postage, internet, and computers. Those expenses can easily cost more than \$60.00. For many, a telephone is the only means they have to talk to loved ones. A telephone with long distance costs at least \$10.00 a month. While the cost of basic cable TV varies from facility to facility, for some residents that is an additional expense. Sixty dollars is not enough to cover all of these costs.

We therefore urge you to support Raised Bill 5226, which would increase the personal needs allowance to \$72.00 per month and starting July 1, 2015 shall require a Social Security cost of living adjustment. This increase would enable nursing home residents to live with dignity, help maintain relationships with family and friends, and pay for basic needs.

Thank you.

