



John Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

120 Cedar Street Newington, Connecticut 06111

Senior and Disabled Center



Dianne Stone
Director

Testimony of
Dianne Stone, Director, Newington Senior and Disabled Center

Aging Committee Public Hearing
March 3, 2014

IN SUPPORT of HB 5395 AN ACT CONCERNING AGING IN PLACE

Senator Ayala, Representative Serra and esteemed Members of the Aging Committee. I am Dianne Stone, the Director of the Newington Senior and Disabled Center, the first Center in the State of Connecticut to achieve National Accreditation. I am writing to express strong support for HB 5395.

Connecticut has made great strides and continues to invest in initiatives to rebalance the long term care system so that people have the choice to live at home. There are currently several initiatives that provide pathways for older adults and people with disabilities to move from institutional care to home and community based care and pathways to prevent of delay entry into institutions including Money Follows the Person, the Home Care Program for Elders, the various Medicaid waivers, falls prevention, care transitions, health care neighborhoods etc.

But, we know that people do not live in these systems. They live in our Towns and Cities and we must invest in building our local capacity. You started that work last session with the enactment of the Livable Communities and Aging in Place statutes. The Commission on Aging has taken up the mantle and, together with partners like the Connecticut Council on Philanthropy and thought leaders both locally and nationally, has begun to build a framework for bringing the livable community concept to our Towns and Cities.

Municipalities have the potential to reach people where they live, to mobilize local resources and to provide programs, services and activities that reflect the needs and culture of the community.

This bill builds on the recommendations of the Task Force to Study Aging in Place. I sat on this task force and can attest to the meaningful and consultative process that went in to drafting recommendations. In the context of the current fiscal climate, this committee was incredibly successful in the implementation of some of the recommendations through statute in 2013. But, as you clearly recognize with the bill before you, there is more work to be done.

Phone: (860) 665-8778 Fax: (860) 667-5835
srcenter@newingtonct.gov
www.newingtonct.gov

First in State of Connecticut
Fully Accredited by the National Institute of Senior Centers

Connecticut is absolutely a state of 169 distinct entities and local aging services are entirely a product of the municipality. The CT Council on Philanthropy describes the issue quite well:

With increasing emphasis being placed on the localities, it is important to note that municipal senior services in Connecticut vary widely among towns. The disparity in financial resources, staffing and expertise, and town commitment to aging services means that municipal aging programs range from nonexistent to comprehensive.

In my work with the National Institute of Senior Centers Accreditation Program, with the Connecticut Association of Senior Centers, the Task Force to Study Aging in Place, the Connecticut Elder Action Network, as an appointed member of the volunteer board of the Commission on Aging and, most importantly, in my job as the Director of the Newington Senior and Disabled Center, I am witness to both the great potential and the lack of standardization, support, coordination and innovation in local services. I believe that the solution is collaborative and that, with the Commission on Aging's leadership and the support that you can create through this bill, we will create a better Connecticut. There are spots of greatness already across the state. This bill, with relatively modest funding, will provide the incentive and support to build capacity, to pilot innovative approaches and to extend the pockets of excellence so that the access to programs, supports and services is not dependent on the Town you live in. We expect every child in our state to receive an appropriate education and are committed to that financially and philosophically. Our elders deserve the same commitment. And, similar to education, municipalities cannot do it alone. Section 4 of the bill provides further incentive by creating recognition for those municipalities that are succeeding in their efforts to become livable for all ages.

As a host site for the Elderly Nutrition Program, we serve 60-70 people a day in our cafeteria and deliver home bound meals to another 45 people. Funding for this program comes from federal Older Americans Act through the State Department on Aging to the Area Agency on Aging to the nutrition contractor (in our case, CRT). We take delivery of the food and serve it. There are several layers between the funding source and the plate. Section 5 of this bill creates a structure to improve the program by bringing all stakeholders together. While I strongly support this, I would ask that the "Site Coordinator" be replaced with "Host Site Representative" as a more accurate definition of the intended stakeholder.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the current and future older adults of our State.

Phone: (860) 665-8778 Fax: (860) 667-5835
dstone@newingtonct.gov
www.newingtonct.gov