



Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging
A nonpartisan research and public policy office of the Connecticut General Assembly

Testimony of

Deb Migneault
Senior Policy Analyst
Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

Aging Committee

March 4, 2014

Senators Ayala and Kelly, Representatives Serra and Adinolfi, and esteemed members of the Aging Committee, my name is Deb Migneault and I am the Senior Policy Analyst for Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging. I thank you for this opportunity to comment on several bills before your today.

As you know, Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging is the non-partisan, public policy office of the General Assembly devoted to preparing Connecticut for a significantly changed demographic and enhancing the lives of the present and future generations of older adults. For over twenty years, the Legislative Commission on Aging has served as an effective leader in statewide efforts to promote choice, independence and dignity for Connecticut's older adults and persons with disabilities.

SB 244: An Act Increasing Home Care Provider Rates

~ CT's Legislative Commission on Aging Supports

CT's Legislative Commission on Aging appreciates this Committee's commitment to the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders (CHCPE), our state's hallmark program supporting older adults at home. It is a key component to the state's success of various "rebalancing" initiatives. The CT Home Care Program for Elders is Connecticut's primary DIVERSION program for older adults. This program provides assistance to more than 15,000 people in Connecticut so that they may stay at home instead of needing nursing home care. Providers for the CT Home Care Program for Elders (including adult day centers, nutrition, home care and homemaker and companion providers) are all reporting that it is nearly impossible to sustain themselves on rates that have not been raised in several years. Nutrition service providers have not had a rate increase since 2007 and assisted living providers not since 2005. This bill provides a rate increase of 2% immediately to the providers of the Home Care Program for Elders and Home Care Program for Adults with Disabilities Pilot Program. It also contains a plan in the next biennial budget to bring the rates to adequate levels with

annual indexing of rates.

As you know, for the last several years, Connecticut has been a national leader in our rebalancing efforts. The major driver for systems change in Connecticut continues to be the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program and its many facets. MFP is a multi-million-dollar systems change grant and the primary driver for long-term care reform in Connecticut. MFP's most notable attribute is that it transitions individuals of all ages from nursing homes into their homes and communities. In other words, the "Medicaid" money paying for their institutional care will now follow that person into the community. Through this rebalancing incentive grant, Connecticut receives enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage money, additional grant money/technical support and yields a lower cost of care for each person (as stipulated in MFP protocol), while the individual gets to realize choice. So far, over 2,000 people in Connecticut have transitioned from nursing homes into the community under MFP and 1,000 people are on the Money Follows the Person waiting list to be transitioned into the community.

While Connecticut has transitioned thousands of people out of nursing homes (and potentially thousands more in the next couple years) and into the community utilizing a network of community based providers to do so, we have not supported this provider network. This puts Connecticut's rebalancing goals in jeopardy.

HB 5350 An Act Concerning an Assistant to the Long-Term Care Ombudsman

~ CT's Legislative Commission on Aging Supports

CT's Legislative Commission on Aging supports the addition of an Assistant Long-Term Care Ombudsman to the Ombudsman Program. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman plays a vital role in our long-term care system by helping to protect the welfare and rights of residents in long-term care facilities. Valued colleague, State LTC Ombudsman, Nancy Shaffer and her staff provide a voice for 30,000 residents of nursing facilities, residential care home and assisted living facilities in Connecticut. Additionally, last year, PA 13-234 Section 17, expanded the role of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman to consumers receiving long-term services and supports living in the community.

Especially now, given Connecticut's proven commitment to serve more people in the community, CT's Legislative Commission on Aging supports the addition of an Assistant Long-Term Care Ombudsman to be able to expand the role of the Ombudsman program accordingly.

HB 5395 An Act Concerning Aging in Place

~ CT's Legislative Commission on Aging Supports

In 2012, through the leadership of this committee, a bill was passed to have a task force study several areas related to Aging in Place. CT's Legislative Commission on

Aging served as both a member of, an administrative staff to, the Aging in Place Task Force (SA 12-6). After several months of work and hearing from a dozen or more experts in the different areas of study, the Task Force submitted its final report to this committee in January 2013 and, through the leadership of this committee, passed an Aging in Place bill last session that moved forward several of the recommendations of the task force. This year, we are happy to see more recommendations of the Task Force's bill outlined in this bill.

Sections 1 and 2 of this bill establishes a grant program for older adults and persons with disabilities who are at risk of losing their ability to live independently and whose income does not exceed 400% of federal poverty level to apply for grant funds that could be used for home modifications and assistive technology to allow applicants to stay in their homes. Modest home modifications, like the installation of grab bars and ramps, can make the difference between an individual's ability to age in place or have to move to perhaps a more restrictive environment.

Section 3 and 4 of the bill builds on the work of the Legislative Commission on Aging's Livable Communities Initiative passed last year (PA 13-250). PA 13-250 created a livable communities initiative to help municipalities/communities prepare for the growing aging population and to reflect rebalancing trends. We are pleased to report that the momentum around the Livable Communities Initiative is growing and we thrilled to be leading this important initiative.

This bill appropriates funding to support the Livable Communities initiative in establishing a matching grant program to provide assistance to municipalities and nonprofit organizations engaged in initiatives designed to allow older adults and persons with disabilities to age in place. Initiatives include, but are not limited to: 1. Affordable and accessible housing; 2. Community and social services; 3. Planning and zoning regulations to permit home sharing and accessory apartments for older adults and persons with disabilities; and 4. Transportation related infrastructure that provides ease of access to older adults and persons with disabilities. Thru this initiative, CT's Legislative Commission on Aging will also recognize municipalities that have implemented livable communities initiatives in their municipalities.

CT's Legislative Commission on Aging supports the various components of this bill which are consistent with the Aging in Place Task Force recommendations. We look forward to our continued work with this committee, with key stakeholders and the CT General Assembly as this bill moves through this legislative process and beyond.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment. As always, please contact us with any questions. It's our pleasure to work with you and serve as an objective, nonpartisan resource to you.

