



**Testimony of Pat Gerckens, AARP Volunteer
Before the
Appropriations Committee
February 14, 2014**

GOOD EVENING, DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE. MY NAME IS PAT GERCKENS. I AM A LONG-TIME AARP VOLUNTEER FROM DERBY AND, AN ACTIVE AND INVOLVED MEMBER OF MY COMMUNITY.

I LOVE GIVING BACK AS A VOLUNTEER WITH AARP AND SEVERAL OTHER ORGANIZATIONS THAT I BELONG TO (INCLUDING ONE OF MY FAVORITES, THE GAELIC AMERICAN CLUB IN FAIRFIELD). I AM A PROUD GRANDMOTHER OF FIVE AND SO FAR, I ENJOY MY SENIOR STATUS AND HOPE THAT THIS CONTINUES.

I AM APPROACHING 77 AND AS I GET OLDER, I MAY NEED SOME EXTRA HELP TAKING CARE OF MY HEALTH AND BASIC TASKS AROUND THE HOUSE BUT!!! THAT DOESN'T MEAN I WANT TO GIVE UP MY INDEPENDENCE OR THE THINGS I LOVE. I AM NOT ALONE IN MY THINKING; AS MOST SENIORS PREFER TO AGE IN THEIR OWN HOME AND COMMUNITY FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE

THAT'S WHY AARP ADVOCATES FOR SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY THAT GIVE FOLKS THE CHOICE TO AGE IN THE PLACE THEY CALL HOME WHERE THEY CAN STILL BE INVOLVED IN THEIR COMMUNITY. PERSONALLY, I HAVE FOUND THAT SENIORS WHO KEEP BUSY AND GET OFF THEIR ROCKERS HAVE A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE AND STAY HEALTHIER. LONGER.

ON BEHALF OF 603,000 AARP MEMBERS IN CT, I WANT TO COMMEND GOVERNOR MALLOY'S VISION FOR A LONG-TERM CARE SYSTEM BUILT ON "CHOICE, ATONOMY AND DIGNITY." AARP STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATION TO IMPLEMENT COMMUNITY FIRST CHOICE/CFC THIS YEAR.

CFC WOULD HELP MORE THAN 1,000 INDIVIDUALS TO RECEIVE CARE IN THE PLACE THEY CALL HOME, SO THEY CAN LIVE THEIR LIFE TO THE FULLEST. PLUS, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL PAY FOR A BIGGER SHARE OF THESE SERVICES. INDIVIDUALS WHO PARTICIPATE IN CFC WILL BE ABLE TO HIRE THEIR OWN ATTENDANT, CUSTOMIZE THE SERVICES, AND MAINTAIN MAXIMUM INDEPENDENCE. THE STATE WOULD ALSO BENEFIT WITH AN ADDITIONAL 6% FEDERAL MATCH ON EVERY INDIVIDUAL SERVED. BASED ON A RECENT REPORT CONNECTICUT COULD SAVE AS MUCH AS \$4.6 MILLION A YEAR.

UNLIKE OTHER FEDERAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY FIRST CHOICE IS NOT TIME LIMITED, SO WE CAN RELY ON THAT FUNDING IN THE FUTURE. CFC IS A TERRIFIC PROGRAM FOR CONNECTICUT AND WE ASK FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

IN ADDITION, THE BUDGET PROPOSAL SUPPORTS OTHER CRITICAL SERVICES THAT GIVE PEOPLE THE CHOICE TO AGE IN PLACE, SUCH AS THE CT HOME CARE PROGRAM FOR ELDERS AND THE ALZHEIMER'S RESPITE CARE PROGRAM. AND FOR THOSE FOLKS UNDER AGE 65 WITH A DISABILITY, THE BUDGET WOULD EXPAND ACCESS TO THE CT HOME CARE PROGRAM FOR ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES, WHICH IS CURRENTLY MAXED OUT. AARP URGES THE COMMITTEE TO INCLUDE THIS EXPANSION IN THE FINAL BUDGET.

WE BELIEVE THAT NO ONE SHOULD BE FORCED OUT OF THEIR HOME TO RECEIVE THE CARE THEY NEED. I ASK YOU TO PLEASE SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY FIRST CHOICE OPTION AND FUND MORE SLOTS FOR THE CONNECTICUT HOME CARE PROGRAM FOR ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES. LET'S GIVE INDIVIDUALS THE POWER TO CHOOSE WHERE THEY WANT TO RECEIVE THEIR CARE. I THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.