



TESTIMONY OF COMMISSIONER EDITH PRAGUE
AGING COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 25, 2014

Good morning, Senator Ayala, Representative Serra, Senator Kelly, Representative Adinolfi and distinguished members of the Aging Committee. My name is Edith Prague. I am the Commissioner of the State Department on Aging. I am also the former Senator from the 19th district and former Senate Chair of the Aging Committee. I am pleased to be before you today to offer written testimony on a number of bills.

S.B. No. 179 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND DEMENTIA TASK FORCE'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON TRAINING

As a Co-Chair of the Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Task Force and the Commissioner of the State Department on Aging, I am cognizant of the critical need for the State of Connecticut to respond to the needs of the burgeoning older adult population in our state that face the implications of living with dementia and Alzheimer's on a daily basis. The Task Force has provided an excellent pathway for us to be able to begin to address the needs of this population and their caregivers. The guidance provided to our Department will assist us in moving forward with our State Plan to address programming and to educate others about these needs. This bill proposes a first step to address concerns related to the many of these vulnerable elders who reside in some type of institutional or supportive living environment.

The Alzheimer's Association has documented that over 60% of individuals who reside in institutional care settings are living with a diagnosis of dementia. It is imperative that the employees of the facilities that care for those with dementia are trained and sensitive to the unique needs of this special population. This bill expands training requirements and ensures the consistency with which not only institutional facilities educate their employees, but also law enforcement and the Probate Court as well. I respect the hard work and bipartisan contributions of the varied members of the Task Force that contributed to the development of these recommendations and support increased training and education.

H.B. No. 5001 (COMM) AN ACT PROVIDING RENTAL COST RELIEF TO ELIGIBLE SENIORS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

I appreciate the efforts of Representative Janowski and the many co-sponsors in supporting the re-opening of eligibility for the Tax Relief for Elderly Renters program. As you know, Governor Malloy's proposed budget provides \$6.5 million in funding to re-

while awaiting eligibility for the CHCPE and/or Medicaid. In fact, in FY 13, 43% of the program participants were granted co-pay waivers due to minimal financial resources. Increasing eligibility limits would likely reduce the amount of funds available to lower income clients who, with limited resources, are the greatest users of this program and most in need. The current manner set forth in the statutes of adjusting the eligibility guidelines appears to provide the appropriate balance for services that is the intent of the program.

open intake of this program. In addition, Governor's Bill No. 21, *An Act Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning General Government*, contains the same implementing language as H.B. No. 5001 to re-open the intake to the program. As the language implementing this provision is the same in both bills, I urge the Committee to support the Governor's budget, as well as his proposed bill No. 21, and to take no action on H.B. No. 5001.

Since 1974, the Renter's Rebate program has helped thousands of elderly and disabled people maintain their housing. Without this program, our most vulnerable citizens would face devastating housing hardships. Older adults depend on this rebate program to maintain their housing and stay in their communities. This program helps older adults preserve the quality of life that allows them to live with dignity and independence. Our senior population is proportionally one of the largest in the country and continues to grow. The Rental Rebate program is one of the programs which allow us to continue to support these growing needs.

H.B. No. 5227 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING AGING

The Department certainly supports the objectives of this bill to study and make recommendations for services needed within the next two decades. In fact, it is within the Department's mandate under the Older American's Act to research and develop a State Plan on Aging relative to the age 60 and over population, including demographics, every three to four years. Although similar in structure, the study suggested by this bill is more comprehensive than what we are currently undertaking for the State Plan. The Department continues to transition, with further staffing enhancements recommended in the Governor's proposed midterm budget. As such, a study might be more appropriately undertaken in the following year, inclusive of additional collaborators who service the older population, rather than at this time. If this bill moves forward, we are prepared to work further with the Committee on more detailed suggestions.

H.B. No. 5228 (RAISED) AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE RESPITE PROGRAM

I stand in opposition to this bill. Its content has been proposed in three prior sessions, while concurrently the Connecticut Statewide Respite Care program sustained funding cuts in both FY 12 and FY 13. In 2009, PA 09-75 introduced significant changes to the program, including increasing the income and asset levels from \$30,000 to \$41,000 and \$80,000 to \$109,000, respectively, as well as expanding the annual per client funding cap from \$3,500 to \$7,500. Additionally, the Act required adjusting the eligibility parameters to reflect increases in the Social Security cost-of-living adjustments. The income and assets limit effective 7/1/2014 will be \$43,846 and \$116,567, respectively. Since this is a respite program and it does not provide long-term services to clients, it is heavily utilized by younger and low income clients who may not be eligible for the Connecticut Homecare Program for Elders (CHCPE), or are in urgent need of services