



55 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
Telephone: (860) 424-5274
Toll Free: 1-866-218-6631
Website: www.ct.gov/aging
Email: aging.sda@ct.gov

Written Testimony before the Aging Services Committee

Elizabeth B. Ritter on behalf of the State Department on Aging

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Senator Flexer, Representative Serra, Senator Kelly Representative Bolinsky and distinguished members of the Aging Committee. My name is Betsy Ritter. I am the Acting Commissioner of the State Department on Aging. I am here today to offer testimony regarding SB 204: AAC BEST PRACTICES FOR PROTECTING SENIOR CITIZENS FROM INTERACTION WITH SEXUAL OFFENDERS.

I speak emphatically when I say that the State Department on Aging considers the safety and security of older adults in their homes and communities to be of the highest priority. Even though this bill includes proposals that work towards this goal, I would encourage the committee to avail itself of the work presently being done by our Coalition for Elder Justice in Ct.

In its State Plan on Aging for 2015-2018, which was approved by the Governor in August of 2014, the Department designated the prevention of elder abuse and protection of rights as one of four major priorities for the next three years. Central to achieving such an initiative was the formation of the Coalition for Elder Justice in Connecticut. The Coalition, supported by Co-chairs from SDA and its fourteen member Coordinating Council, consists of both public and private stakeholders – agencies and organizations - from all sectors in CT that share an elder justice mission in their day to day servicing of older persons. Last July, Governor Malloy issued an Executive Order supporting the Coalition and requiring the support of state agencies.

Already the Coalition has begun addressing priorities through workgroups including financial exploitation, fraud and scams, law enforcement education, and most recently, a senior safety workgroup which evolved after an assault at a senior center. This workgroup, which is in formation with the leadership of Police Chief Gary MacNamara from the Coordinating Council, will specifically address safety issues in various facilities using some of the findings he has been instrumental in initiating for school facilities.



As Acting Commissioner, I welcome providing our resources and support for this important mission. I would suggest that the Committee look to the work presently being done by the Coalition workgroups to gather more specific information and data as it relates to strategies to protect senior safety. Through the Coalition workgroups, duplication of effort may be reduced and the major safety concerns of older persons may be addressed, thereby achieving the bill's laudable goal of protecting senior citizens here in Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and attention to this issue. Information regarding the State Plan on Aging can be found on the State Department on Aging's website. Of course the staff at SDA is always available to assist you at any time and in any way.

