



Testimony of Brenda Lind, AARP Volunteer

On S.B. 716 (COMM), *AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE RESPITE CARE PROGRAM.*

Aging Committee

February 17, 2015

Good morning, Chairpersons Flexer and Serra, Ranking Members Kelly and Bolinsky, members of the Aging Committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of Committee Bill 716, AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE RESPITE CARE PROGRAM.

My name is Brenda Lind. I am an AARP volunteer from West Hartford, CT. I am here today to speak not just as an advocate, but also as a daughter, whose mother had Alzheimer's disease.

AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization with an age 50+ membership of nearly 37 million nationwide, and approximately 600,000 here in Connecticut. AARP helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, family caregiving, and independent living.

We strongly support Committee Bill 716, which would raise the income limit for the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program to \$50,000/annually and allow additional individuals to qualify for services. S.B. 716 would also ensure that funding is in place for newly eligible individuals to receive services. The Alzheimer's Respite Care Program is a life-line for family caregivers who support loved ones with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias in the community.

Under the program, overburdened caregivers are provided financial grants to help pay for services such as adult day care, in-home care and short-term inpatient respite care. These services provide temporary reprieve caregivers need to reduce stress and prevent burn-out.

Each year in Connecticut, more than 700,000 unpaid caregivers perform a labor of love by helping family members live independently and remain at home, where they want to be. These unsung heroes are the backbone of the state's long-term care system, providing unpaid care valued at more than \$5.8 billion annually. The care families provide is nearly twice what the state spends on Medicaid—in a year—for institutional stays, like nursing homes, as well as professional services to help people remain at home.

Many family caregivers are often on call 24/7 and almost half (43%) manage family and caregiving responsibilities while working full-time. In a recent survey, AARP found that 51% of family caregivers felt strained by their caregiving responsibilities and 44% reported using their own money to help their loved ones.

S.B. 716 recognizes the important role family caregivers play in our state. If enacted, the proposal would give family caregivers a little personal time to run errands, manage their own health care needs, and take care of their personal well-being. Please support S.B. 716. Thank you for your consideration.

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