

Testimony to the General Assembly's Appropriations Committee
March 5, 2015

In support of the Governor's budget recommendation for the Commission on Aging

William Eddy, 37 Winterset Lane
Simsbury, CT, 06070

Esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Bill Eddy. I have been an older adult member volunteer of Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging since 2005.

I appreciate the opportunity to present my views today in support of that portion of Bill No. 6824 addressing the Governor's budget recommendation for the Commission on Aging.

On all matters concerning the growing population of older adults in Connecticut, the Legislative Commission on Aging serves as the nonpartisan public policy and research office of the General Assembly.

The Commission provides legislative research and testimony, serves as expert staff to the legislature on key specific policy matters, provides leadership among stakeholders, promotes sound policy initiatives and reviews and comments on state departmental policies, procedures, structures and outcomes that affect older adults and persons with disabilities.

It does all this—and much more—with a four-person professional staff located on the fifth floor of the Capitol, supported by a 21-member, unpaid volunteer board from communities throughout Connecticut. Its annual budget is about \$450,000. As a retired financial executive I'm tempted to add that this budget is so small that it hardly registers as a percentage of the state's overall budget. But rather than focus on the budget, I believe it is more productive to discuss the value the Commission on Aging brings to you and our state.

In carrying out its statutory mandate, the Commission cultivates and maintains extensive relationships with public and private service providers to, advocates for, and consumers within the older adult community. This is an older adult community whose diverse population is soaring. We are, in fact, the seventh oldest state in the nation.

Unlike the aging-related relevant Executive branch agencies with which the Commission on Aging has strong working relationships, the Commission does not administer or provide direct services. Doing so would conflict with the role the Legislative Commission on Aging plays in seeking to balance the policy objectives of the Legislature with the operational objectives of the Executive branch. This was the unique role wisely envisioned by the General Assembly when it created the Commission in 1993.

The administration of programs and delivery of services for the care-dependent older adult population is fragmented, the cost burden is enormous, and the state is dealing with antiquated information systems. The emphasis is and has been on thoughtfully shifting, where appropriate, the load to less expensive home- and community-based care settings where most recipients of services would rather be anyway. The Legislative Commission on Aging, through extensive committee and council memberships, provides broad perspective and extensive leadership among stakeholders in this arena.

The Legislative Commission on Aging is and has been effectively collaborating on fixing the state-administered Medicaid delivery system that is fragmented and broken and represents a growing 2 plus billion dollars of the State's 20-billion dollar annual budget.

Under the leadership of Julia Evans Starr the Legislative Commission on Aging carefully executes its mandates and is very thoughtful and deliberative in its budget planning process. It represents the very best in state government.

In summary, I ask for your support of the smoothly functioning, cost-effective Legislative Commission on Aging.

Thank you.