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Written Testimony before the Aging Services Committee

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

February 17, 2015

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 support for SB 6717: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER PROGRAM and thank the committee for raising this bill on our agency's behalf.

The State Department on Aging (SDA) is requesting a technical change to 17a-316a to change the name of the program – Community Choices – to the federally recognized Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) program. Additionally, the technical change seeks to administer ADRCs as a component of the CHOICES program - Connecticut's programs for **H**ealth insurance assistance, **O**utreach, **I**nformation and referral, **C**ounseling and **E**ligibility **S**creening.

In 2004, the Federal Administration on Aging began providing grants to states for demonstration projects which would phase in the establishment of joint ADRCs to serve as single points of entry into the long-term supports and services system for older adults and people with disabilities. In 2008, Connecticut, through the then Aging Services Division of the Department of Social Services, applied for federal funding to develop projects in two of the state's regions in partnership with the regional Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and Independent Living Centers. Connecticut legislation (contained in Sec. 17a-316a) which referred to the ADRCs as "Community Choices" program was subsequently enacted to enable SDA to apply for federal grants to provide a single, coordinated system of information, and access for all residents seeking long-term services and supports via ADRCs under the coordination of SDA.

It is also the intent of the Department to place ADRCs under the umbrella of CHOICES. For almost 20 years "CHOICES" has been the widely recognized moniker in CT for "one-stop-shopping" aging information and assistance. Operated under the auspices of the SDA and through the AAAs, these programs have been funded through the federal



Older Americans Act by the Administration on Aging and the parent U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grants and allocations. The flagship program, and most widely recognized, has been the health insurance assistance program detailed in the state statutes under Sec. 17a-314. When the proposed bill was drafted, the language was written to reflect that the ADRCs would be administered as part of SDA's health insurance assistance program rather than administered as a separate program under the CHOICES overall umbrella of aging information and assistance programs.

The Department would like to respectfully request that the proposed bill as written be amended to reflect this change to CHOICES by eliminating the phrase "health insurance assistance" in lines 10 and 11, and replacing it with "CHOICES". In so doing, this will align the ADRCs under the CHOICES umbrella of programming, not the health insurance assistance aspect as the Bill currently reads. All CHOICES and Community Choices programming are accessible through the same toll-free number (1-800-994-9422) and physically operated together out of each of the five regional AAAs. These technical changes impact none of the substantive aspects of the program but merely clarify the actual overall scope of the CHOICES programs administered by the Department on Aging. By changing the name from the "Community Choices" program to "Aging and Disability Resource Center" program they will be recognized as they are throughout the country as the single points of entry into the long-term supports and services system in CT for older adults and people with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this technical change. We respectfully request that the committee take favorable action on this bill, with the modification we have recommended. As always the Department is at your disposal at any time for questions or discussion.

