



Testimony to the Aging Committee

Submitted by Mag Morelli, President, LeadingAge Connecticut

February 17, 2015

Regarding

- **Senate Bill 287, An Act Creating A Task Force To Study Alternative Funding Sources For Nutritional Services For Senior Citizens**
- **Senate Bill 716, An Act Expanding Eligibility For The Alzheimer's Disease Respite Care Program**
- **Senate Bill 860, An Act Concerning Presumptive Medicaid Eligibility For Home Care**
- **House Bill 6684, An Act Concerning A Study Of Emergency Power Needs In Public Housing For The Elderly**
- **House Bill 6685, An Act Increasing Home Care Provider Rates**
- **House Bill 6716, An Act Expanding Access To Home Care**

Good morning Senator Flexer, Representative Serra, and members of the Aging Committee. My name is Mag Morelli and I am the President of LeadingAge Connecticut, a membership organization representing mission-driven and not-for-profit provider organizations serving older adults across the continuum of long term care, services and supports and including senior housing. On behalf of LeadingAge Connecticut, I would like to testify on several of the bills before you today.

Senate Bill 287, An Act Creating A Task Force To Study Alternative Funding Sources For Nutritional Services For Senior Citizens

We thank the Committee for raising this bill that acknowledges the need to find adequate funding sources for elderly nutrition programs. Helping people to stay in the community is a basic goal of our state's long term care plan and a strong elderly nutrition program is central to the success of that goal. Unfortunately, the costs associated with the delivery of congregate and home delivered meals have increased dramatically over the last several years making it difficult for many providers to continue to provide the service. It is therefore critical that we find the funding that is necessary to ensure the continuation of these programs. For many older adults, the meal they receive at the congregate meal sites or through home delivery is the only nutritious meal they can afford. LeadingAge Connecticut supports this study and would be pleased to assist the Committee in any way possible.

Senate Bill 716, An Act Expanding Eligibility For The Alzheimer's Disease Respite Care Program

LeadingAge Connecticut strongly supports our state's respite care program and would support any effort to increase funding so as to ensure that those currently enrolled in the program continue to receive an adequate level of respite care as well as to expand enrollment to increase the number of individuals and their deserving caregivers who would be able to receive respite services. Many elders with dementia live within their own homes for many years with the majority of the caregiving being

provided by a spouse, relative, or close friend. These unpaid caregivers provide countless hours of unpaid long term care, services and supports. They are the true heroes of our long term services and supports system and providing them with needed respite is not only the right thing to do, but it is the prudent thing to do as they save our Medicaid program millions of dollars every year.

Senate Bill 860, An Act Concerning Presumptive Medicaid Eligibility For Home Care

LeadingAge Connecticut thanks the Committee for raising this bill which brings attention to the eligibility determination backlog in the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders. The delay in processing the long term care Medicaid applications for this segment of our vulnerable elderly population is preventing individuals in the community from receiving needed services in a timely manner and placing them at risk. We strongly support a resolution to this situation and have been working with the Department of Social Services toward that goal. We are hopeful that recent restructuring within the application processing structure will help to achieve efficiencies in the system. We would also be interested in a system of presumptive eligibility for applicants to the program if the Committee determines this to be a possible solution to the excessive delays in the eligibility process.

House Bill 6684, An Act Concerning A Study Of Emergency Power Needs In Public Housing For The Elderly

LeadingAge Connecticut represents many affordable senior housing organizations throughout the state including several state-assisted housing developments. We recognize and appreciate the fact that the issue of emergency power needs for such housing sites has been an ongoing concern for this Committee. We support the proposed study of emergency power needs in senior housing as outlined in this bill and offer our support and assistance.

House Bill 6685, An Act Increasing Home Care Provider Rates

LeadingAge Connecticut would like to thank the Committee for raising this bill to increase the rates for community based providers who serve those enrolled in the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders (CHCPE). Last year LeadingAge Connecticut was part of a statewide coalition of provider organizations who advocated for a financial investment in the community based provider network that is caring for the older adults enrolled in the CHCPE and I want to take this opportunity to thank you, the entire legislature and the administration for hearing our plea and raising the CHCPE rates by 1% effective January 1 of this year. But as this bill recognizes, that was only the beginning. We now need to continue our investment in the home and community based provider rate system.

The Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders is the heart and soul of our state's rebalancing plan when it comes to aging services. It is this program that helps eligible clients over the age of 65 continue to live at home and to age in place. It is the delivery of the services provided within the Home Care Program for Elders, packaged in an individualized care plan for each client, that allows an older adult to remain at home or to return to home through the Money Follows the Person Program.

That is why it is vital that we continue to invest in this program and in the providers who deliver the services.

To be eligible for the CHCPE, applicants must be 65 years of age or older, be at risk of nursing home placement and meet the program's stringent financial eligibility criteria. To be at risk of nursing home placement means that the applicant needs assistance with critical needs such as bathing, dressing, eating, taking medications, and toileting.

CHCPE Services may include:

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| -Conflict Care Management Services | -Adult Day Health Services |
| -Companion Services | -Home Delivered Meals |
| -Homemaker Services | -Assisted Living Services |
| -Personal Care Attendant Services | -Chore Assistance |
| -Adult Family Living (new service) | -Home Health Nursing |
| -Emergency Response Systems | -Home Health Nursing Aides |

Prior to the 1% rate increase on January 1, most providers in the CHCPE had not received a rate increase in years. 2005 for assisted living service providers, 2007 for home delivered meals, and 2011 for adult day services. Even with the 1% increase, many organizations cannot continue to provide services at the current level of reimbursement.

We support this bill before you which would bring an immediate 2% increase in the provider rates and then bring the rates up to adequate levels based on the cost of providing the care. Last session's legislation required the Department of Social Services to conduct a study of the CHCPE rates to determine what the actual cost of providing the services. This study will be extremely helpful in determining when and how we can raise the rate structure to meet the cost of providing the services.

In closing, we urge the Committee to support this bill. Without adequate reimbursement rates, new quality providers will not enter the home and community based services market, long standing quality providers will be forced to leave the market, and the state will not achieve a balanced system of long term care, services and supports.

House Bill 6716, An Act Expanding Access To Home Care

LeadingAge Connecticut believes in the principle of ensuring choice for persons seeking long term services and supports and we know that a strong and balanced continuum of care that provides the right care, in the place, at the right time will lead to a more efficient and effective care delivery system. It is for these reasons that we strongly support the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders (CHCPE). The state funded portion of the CHCPE that is addressed in this proposal is invaluable to many as it helps older adults access services sooner, before they have exhausted all of their assets. We commend the Committee for seeking a reduction in the current co-pay requirements which can be seen as a barrier to receiving care. And while we would always support expansion of this program, we also encourage the Committee to place a priority on ensuring adequate funding for the elderly who are currently eligible and enrolled so that they can continue to receive the services and supports they need to remain in the community.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Mag Morelli, President



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