

Testimony of
Dianne Stone, Director, Newington Senior and Disabled Center

Aging Committee Public Hearing
March 3, 2015

**IN SUPPORT of RB 1002
AN ACT CONCERNING SENIOR CENTERS**

Senator Flexer, Representative Serra and esteemed Members of the Aging Committee. I am Dianne Stone, the Director of the Newington Senior and Disabled Center, the first Center in the State of Connecticut to achieve National Accreditation. I am here to express support for raised bill 1002, AN ACT CONCERNING SENIOR CENTERS.

Connecticut has made great strides and continues to invest in initiatives to rebalance the long term care system so that people have the choice to live at home. There are currently several initiatives that provide pathways for older adults and people with disabilities to move from institutional care to home and community based care and pathways to prevent of delay entry into institutions.

But, we know that people do not live in these systems. They live in our Towns and Cities and we must invest in building our local capacity. You started that work with the enactment of the Livable Communities and Aging in Place statutes. The Commission on Aging has provided tremendous leadership and, together with partners, has begun to build a framework for bringing the livable community concept to our Towns and Cities.

Municipalities have the potential to reach people where they live, to mobilize local resources and to provide programs, services and activities that reflect the needs and culture of the community.

Connecticut is absolutely a state of 169 distinct entities and local aging services are entirely a product of the municipality. The CT Council on Philanthropy described the issue quite well:

With increasing emphasis being placed on the localities, it is important to note that municipal senior services in Connecticut vary widely among towns. The disparity in financial resources, staffing and expertise, and town commitment to aging services means that municipal aging programs range from nonexistent to comprehensive.

In my work with the National Institute of Senior Centers Accreditation Program, with the Connecticut Association of Senior Centers, the Task Forces to Study Aging in Place and Senior Safety Zones, the Connecticut Elder Action Network, as an appointed member of the volunteer board of the Commission on Aging and, most importantly, in my job as the Director of the Newington Senior and Disabled Center, I am witness to both the great potential and the lack of standardization, support, coordination and innovation in local services.

I believe that the solution is collaborative and that, with the leadership of the Commission on Aging, the cooperation of our partners in the aging services network, especially the State Department on Aging, and your support, we can continue the conversation that was started through the Profile of Senior Centers in Connecticut. Together we can provide the incentive and support to build capacity, to pilot innovative approaches and to extend the pockets of excellence so that the access to programs, supports and services is not dependent on the Town you live in. We expect every child in our state to receive an appropriate education and are committed to that financially and philosophically. Our elders deserve the same commitment. And, similar to education, municipalities cannot do it alone.

The Task Force proposed in this bill can provide a forum to continue the conversation and build recommendations that will help to strengthen the capacity of local aging services and their role in the broader aging services network.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the older adults of our State.