



**Testimony to the Appropriations Committee**

**Presented by Mag Morelli, President, LeadingAge Connecticut**

**March 2, 2015**

**In Support of Maintaining the Funding for the Tax Abatement Grant Program**

**HB 6824, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2017, and Making Appropriations therefor and other Provisions Related to Revenue**

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Mag Morelli I am the President of LeadingAge Connecticut, a membership organization representing over one hundred and thirty mission-driven and not-for-profit provider organizations serving older adults throughout the continuum of long term care, including affordable senior housing. Our members are sponsored by religious, fraternal, community, and municipal organizations that are committed to providing quality care and services to their residents and clients. Our member organizations, many of which have served their communities for generations, are dedicated to expanding the world of possibilities for aging.

On behalf of LeadingAge Connecticut, I would like testify in strong opposition to the proposed elimination of the Tax Abatement Grant program for nonprofit-sponsored affordable housing and in support of maintaining the \$1,372,414 in funding for the program.

The Tax Abatement for Grant Program represents agreements made years ago between the State of Connecticut, municipalities and non-profit sponsor organizations in order to attract much needed sponsored elderly housing development. Eliminating this money not only creates financial hardship, but it also breaches these formal agreements.

Three of LeadingAge Connecticut's housing members providing a total of 648 units of affordable senior housing would be affected by the loss of these funds. These non-profit providers, Immanuel House in Hartford, Towers One/Tower East in New Haven, and King's Daughters and Sons Housing in Norwalk, will be asked to absorb property tax payments in the tens of thousands of dollars - and they may not be able to do so.

This cut to non-profit senior housing does not make sense from the perspective of the future of aging services in this state. The State of Connecticut has adopted a *Long Term Care Plan* that calls for a *balanced* system of aging services. Hoping to decrease dependence on nursing home care, the state's plan places a priority on providing home-centered care that will allow older adults to remain at home and be supported in the community. Providing the affordable senior

housing where seniors can receive the services and supports they need is a key element to any rebalancing plan. Supporting and appropriately funding the needed services and supports, such as the *resident service coordinator program* and the *affordable assisted living program*, is also essential.

As we move toward making a balanced aging services system a reality, affordable residential options must be made available so that low- and modest- income older adults can indeed remain in the community. Many seniors cannot find decent housing at a cost they can afford, especially if they require adaptations to accommodate physical limitations or services to help them age in place. In fact, efforts to transition people to community-based settings frequently are stymied by the lack of suitable and affordable housing. If the state truly wants to move toward providing a more balanced continuum of long term care, it will need to **invest** in affordable housing alternatives, **not cut the funding to our current stock**.

Older adults must be afforded the opportunity to remain in the towns and cities that they have lived in or to be near the families that they love. We urge the state to maintain these tax abatement funds and demonstrate their commitment to providing affordable community based options for older adults.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

**Mag Morelli, President**

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