



A Nonpartisan Public Policy and Research Office of the Connecticut General Assembly

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Testimony of Julia Evans Starr
Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

Government Administration and Elections Committee
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HB 5049: An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for General Government

Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila and esteemed members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, my name is Julia Evans Starr and I am the Executive Director for Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging. As you know, Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging is the non-partisan, public policy and research office of the General Assembly, devoted to preparing Connecticut for a significantly changed demographic and enhancing the lives of the present and future generations of older adults.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on Section 20 of HB 5049: An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for General Government. Section 20 of the HB 5049 changes the Renters' Rebate program to "within available appropriations". This change will potentially reduce rent rebate benefits to low-income renters by reducing the percent of all claims in order to stay within available appropriations.

The Renters' Rebate program, originally intended as a companion program to the Circuit Breaker program for low-income homeowners, has historically provided a partial reimbursement of rent and utility bills to older adults and persons with disabilities who meet specific low-income guidelines. In FY 2013 (latest data available), the program served over 48,000 low-income renters. Rebate amounts can range from \$50 to \$900. The average married couple eligible for the program received a rebate of between \$400 and \$500 and the average rebate for unmarried applicants was between \$600 and \$700.

The CT Elder Economic Security Initiative – a partnership between CT's Legislative Commission on Aging, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and Wider Opportunities for Women, Inc. – has studied many of the compounding factors that lead to economic insecurity of older adults in Connecticut. The Elder Economic Security Index measures how much income an older adults needs to adequately meet their basic needs – without public or private assistance. Given today's cost of living and premium of living in a high-cost state such as Connecticut, a range of stable programs is needed. Findings show housing costs (rent, mortgage, taxes and insurance) can utilize more than half of living expenses for older adults. Public supports, like the Renters' Rebate program, can help older adults fill the gap between what they earn and what is needed to be economically secure. We encourage continued support of this program.

