

CT Alliance for Basic Human Needs
65 Hungerford St., Hartford, CT 06106
Tel 860.904.5534
www.cabhn.org



**Testimony before the Human Services Committee
In support of HB 5439
An Act Concerning the Elimination of Asset Limits in Certain Public Assistance Programs
By Paola Serrecchia, Community Outreach Advocate
March 3, 2016**

My name is Paola Serrecchia from Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs. I want to thank the Human Service Committee to have an opportunity to have voices heard on this important issue, Eliminating Asset Limits in our cash assistance programs. I ask that you SUPPORT HB 5439.

As we know when people are applying for benefits they need to provide a lot of documentation to the department of social services to receive benefits. In the application for benefits, 11 of 51 questions are solely about assets. DSS then has to verify all the answers to those asset questions. This take an extraordinary amount of time and resources. This also delays access to benefits that are vital to people that are already suffering from poverty.

Significantly less than 1% of people applying have assets over the limit. It would save the state money eliminating these questions because it would considerably reduce the amount of time spent by DSS workers on each application and redetermination.

The way the process works now keeps people in poverty and dependent on the Welfare system because they are unable to save for their future. The system should reward people for becoming self-sufficient and not shut out all opportunity for people to support themselves or their families. It penalizes people that are already impoverished and only keeps them dependent on the system, when we should be ensuring that applicants have a right to save for a future and become self-sufficient. If people cannot attain a car that is dependable for locating and maintaining work, they will be back in the system for help.

Eight states across the country have already have eliminated asset limits for cash assistance programs and every state saved money as a result. It is not fair that we should take the little that people have to take care of their needs for themselves and their children. The way it works now is we force people to get rid of everything they have that might help them stay out of poverty and then tell them they need to get off cash assistance after 21 months. As one lady informed me should I be forced to give my mother's engagement ring away that she gave to me before her death so I can get benefits. Never mind that TANF is not a livable income for families any way so how is someone supposed to move forward when the system penalizes you when trying to move forward.

Making people spend down long term care insurance policies and funeral contracts makes people MORE dependent on state services towards their end of life.

In sum, I ask that you SUPPORT HB 5439 because it saves the state money, saves people and DSS worker's time, and helps families become self-sufficient.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.