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## Human Services Committee

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Testimony

Deb Migneault

### Senior Policy Analyst, Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and esteemed members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Deb Migneault and I am the Senior Policy Analyst for Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging. I thank you for this opportunity to comment on SB 278 and SB 280 today.

As you know, Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging is the non-partisan, public policy 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.

### **SB 278: An Act Concerning Nursing Facility Minimum Staffing Levels ~ Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging supports**

Connecticut has the second lowest nursing facility staffing level requirements in the country. Our state mandates 1.9 hours of nursing staff care per resident per day. This requirement was established decades ago. The composition of people in nursing homes has vastly changed since then; nursing home residents have more complex medical needs, with multiple co-morbidities and are much older. This status of a more vulnerable nursing home population will continue as a result of people living longer, hospitals discharging patients more quickly and due to a variety of rebalancing efforts.

It is widely recommended that the staffing levels equal 4.1 hours of nursing staff care per resident. This bill would raise Connecticut from its present 1.9 ratio minimum to 2.3. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) website named nursing home compare maintain a survey which demonstrates that Connecticut nursing homes exceed 2.7 hours of care. (Other researchers question the validity of the methodology used and went so far to suggest that these reports across the country were grossly inaccurate and high). The Affordable Care Act included a provision to require nursing homes to provide data based on actual payroll though these efforts have been stalled.



Research findings are overwhelming and consistent that staffing levels is directly tied to quality of care. Understaffing harms nursing home residents and can lead to pressure ulcers, infections, malnutrition, dehydration and serious falls.

Additionally, the Legislative Commission on Aging supports the provisions of the bill that reduces the social worker ratios in nursing facilities to 80 beds to 1 social worker in 2016 and 60 beds to 1 social worker in 2020. Currently, the ratio is set at 120 beds for 1 social worker.

Social workers provide a range of supports to nursing facility residents that impact quality of care. Social workers are often helping residents and families adjust to nursing facility placement, developing care plans that reflect the social and emotional needs of the resident, protecting residents rights and dealing with resident conflicts, and assessing cognitive and mental functioning. Additionally, social workers are often very involved in discharge planning and arranging for supports to be provided at home.

The current ratio standards are not adequate considering the vast amount of services a social worker provides in a nursing facility setting. Current ratios only allow for 9 minutes of time each week with a resident. Additionally, as outlined earlier in my testimony, the complexity of the needs of a nursing facility resident is much different than they were 30 years ago when these standards were originally established.

**SB 280: An Act Concerning the Long-Term Care Ombudsman's Notice to Nursing Home Residents ~ CT's Legislative Commission on Aging Supports**

Currently, nursing facilities are required to provide written notice to residents, family members, and conservators when the nursing facility has filed a certificate of need application to the Department of Social Services. The Certificate of Need application must be filed whenever a facility is intending to change ownership or request a significant bed reduction or a change in service. In other words, a nursing facility must provide notice to residents when they intend to close the facility or the facility is intending to undergo a change of ownership. This bill requires nursing facilities to include with their written notice to residents information from the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman about the services available to them from LTC Ombudsman and rights of the resident.

The LTC Ombudsman plays a critically important role to nursing facility residents in the event of a nursing facility closure or change in ownership. They act as advocate for the resident and make sure the rights of the resident are upheld during a very difficult transition time for the facility, the resident and their families. Unfortunately, residents' and family members may not be aware of the services and supports available to them from the LTC Ombudsman. We fully support this notification requirement that we hope will create enhanced access to the important services of the LTC Ombudsman.