

*Written Testimony*

*Human Services Committee*

*March 3, 2016*

*Elizabeth B. Ritter, State Department on Aging*

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Markley, Representative Wood and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Betsy Ritter. I am the Commissioner of the State Department on Aging. I am here today to provide testimony in support of SB 280: AN ACT CONCERNING THE LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN'S NOTICE TO NURSING HOME RESIDENTS, and to thank the committee for raising this bill on behalf of the agency.

When a nursing home facility intends to close, current law requires that a copy of the *Letter of Intent (LOI)* to close, which is the facility's official notice to the State, be sent to the residents of the facility and their families. The proposed amendment to this existing statute will require that notification to residents and families be accompanied by a letter from the Office of the State Long Term Care Ombudsman which clearly outlines the residents' rights to carefully consider and determine their relocation plans.

The LOI is initially sent to the Department of Social Services and sets in motion the processing of the facility's request to close. The next step is a public hearing at which DSS hears testimony from interested parties regarding a potential closure. Often times, many residents have already been discharged to other nursing homes by the time this public hearing is held. The receipt of an LOI can be very disconcerting to the affected resident and their family, and it may be difficult for them to understand what options are available to them. Therefore, it is important to balance the message from the facility's perspective with the assurance that the residents have certain rights and protections.

The mandate of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is to ensure that residents' welfare and rights are protected. The addition of this joint letter from the State Department on Aging and the Office of the State Ombudsman will present a more balanced picture to the residents and their families of what is happening, what their legal rights and protections are, and that they can take time and not be rushed into any decisions. This letter also has the potential to enhance opportunities for the Money Follows the Person program to engage residents and



families in discussing options for community living, thus forwarding the Governor's initiatives to rebalance the State's long-term services and supports systems.

The State of Connecticut is likely to experience more nursing home closures in the future. Enacting this legislation now will provide assurances to residents at a difficult time and will ensure they have greater opportunity to review all their options should the DSS Commissioner decide to grant the home's request to close.

I thank you for hearing this bill and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.





An Equal Opportunity / Affirmative Action Employer