

**Appropriations Committee  
Public Hearing  
Thursday, February 11, 2016**

Written Testimony by Mary Tibbals, Public Policy Manager, Alzheimer's Association, Connecticut Chapter.

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support to all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition of the proposed budget reductions to the Statewide Respite Care Program of \$130,830 and the additional 5.75 percent reduction to the agency operating funds of the State Department on Aging.

Alzheimer's disease is the 6<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death and among the top 10 in America that cannot be prevented, cured or even slowed. There are 73,000 Connecticut constituents 65 and older living with Alzheimer's disease. By 2025, this number is projected to increase to an estimated 91,000 resulting in a 24.7% increase of older adults living with the disease.

Alzheimer's takes a devastating toll, not just on those with the disease but also on their caregivers. In 2014, 177,000 Connecticut caregivers provided a total of \$201 million hours of unpaid care to those with Alzheimer's and other dementia – care valued at \$2.4 billion.

60% of Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers rate the emotional stress of caregiving as high or very high; and 40% suffer from depression. Due to the long duration of the disease and the intense care needs, the physical and emotional toll on caregivers living in Connecticut resulted in them having \$139 million in higher health costs of their own in 2014.

**The Statewide Respite Care Program**

- The Statewide Respite Care Program provides resources such as individualized care planning, support and services that help caregivers maintain the independence, safety and welfare of their loved ones affected by Alzheimer's disease or related dementias. Access to adult day care, home health aide, homemaker/companion and other appropriate programs decreases isolation that can lead to depression and other health disparities. This cost avoidance service allows affected individuals to remain in their homes and communities as long as possible and saves the State millions of dollars as compared to the Medicaid costs spent for nursing home care.
- The Statewide Respite Program is needed now more than ever because the number of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease is growing and there is an increased prevalence of individuals developing younger onset. In addition, there is a growing number of referrals from the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders (CHCPE) due to enrollment caps and increased co-pay costs. Lower funds to the program results in smaller grant awards to a larger pool of

applicants, long waiting list for eligible applicants and recertified applicants being placed at the bottom of waiting list delaying their access to services that they're currently using.

- Connecticut has invested millions of dollars in an effort to “rebalance” the Medicaid system and the statewide respite care program is a cost-effective way to facilitate this effort.
- An estimated 60-70% of older adults with Alzheimer’s disease live in the community and their care is provided by family members, relatives and friends. As the disease progresses, they require more services such as the respite care program. This program is in alignment with the overwhelming personal preference of individuals with the disease and their families that want to stay in their own homes.
- Individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias are higher users of health care, long-term care and hospice services. The average annual Medicare payments for these individuals are three times higher than for those without the disease. Thus the importance of appropriately funding the respite care program to meet the immediate and future care needs of people affected by Alzheimer’s and other dementias while avoiding negative, long term demands on the Medicaid and State budget.

I appreciate this opportunity to submit this testimony and encourage you to oppose the recommended budget reductions to the Statewide Respite Care Program and State Department on Aging

Please feel free to contact me at [mtibbals@alz.org](mailto:mtibbals@alz.org) or (860) 372-0452.

2015 Alzheimer’s Disease Facts and Figures report at [alz.org/facts](http://alz.org/facts).