



Testimony Supporting Home- & Community-Based Services for Seniors
Kathy Null, AARP Volunteer Advocate

February 11, 2016

Good evening, I am Kathy Null, an AARP advocacy volunteer, a 70 year-old Baby Boomer, and a life-long CT resident. I visit a nursing home weekly and have learned in my conversations with residents that some have just given up, not knowing what other options might exist to return home and get services in their own community. They just accept their situation and don't want to rock the boat.

So, I am here as a caregiver, advocate, and senior to stand up for services that give individuals the choice and autonomy to live with dignity in the setting they choose.

New data confirms that providing independent living options, not only help seniors and their families, but also saves taxpayers money. In a recent Health Management Associates report, titled 'Home- and Community-Based Services in Connecticut are Cost-Effective Investments', Medicaid costs for nursing home vs. home care were compared.

AARP has shared this vital information with its CT members and with many state legislators. Among the key findings, Connecticut can provide care for three individuals at home for everyone one person in institutional care. The report also found that home care and respite for family caregivers were cost-effective at keeping seniors in their own home's and communities, where they want to be, and slowing the growth in long-term care spending over time.

Today I want to add my own observations, first as a wife and caregiver for my husband, and also from my other volunteer activities.

As a wife of nearly 50 years, my time is spent making sure my husband receives the best care possible due to his many health conditions (4 specialists). It has also reinforces my goal to keep us together in our own home, enjoying our aging years independently. While we strive to maintain our home, we are very much aware of the help we will need in another 10+ years. Knowing that there are a combination of state and nonprofit help programs currently available help us think about aging with dignity.

But, in order to support independent living options for seniors, we must adequately fund the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders (CHCPE) and Alzheimer's respite care offered under the Statewide Respite Care Program. These programs ensure seniors and family caregivers have access to the best resources in the community, including home

care and adult day care. AARP is pleased that the Malloy Administration identified the ability to “live with dignity in one’s own home and community” as a core state service. **I hope the legislature ensures this budget priority is protected and preserved in the final state budget.**

If we keep home and community based supports available, CT can allow its residents to age with dignity because they have a feeling of independence and choice, and the state will save money over the long-term.

Thank you.