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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE REGARDING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS FEBRUARY 11, 2016

My name is Kevin Brophy and I am the Director of Elder Law for Connecticut Legal Services, a non-profit legal aid agency. My testimony is submitted on behalf of my low income elderly clients, and the many low income elderly residents of CT. I write today in opposition to the Governor's Budget Proposal to circumvent the legislative process and allow state agencies to decide how to allocate funds for various programs within their jurisdiction. I also oppose the administrative consolidation of the home care programs for long term care and Protective Services for the Elderly. I am also strongly opposed to the proposed reduction in the burial fund for indigent individuals. And, I am also requesting the restoration of the \$15.00 prescription cost cap for individuals who are on both Medicare and Medicaid.

First, I am opposed to giving administrative agencies the authority to make budgetary decisions on various human services programs. This would circumvent the current budgetary process. We now have an opportunity to provide valuable input and information on particular line items that impact our low income clients. It helps guide the Legislature in formulating priorities and identifying critical needs. It provides a more open and transparent procedure for the public. These fundamental and important decisions should be made by our Legislature, not commissioners of state agencies.

Elderly, low income individuals also depend on the predictability of programs which provide for their basic needs. We want to avoid administrative agencies making arbitrary decisions that severely reduce necessary services without any opportunity to challenge.

Second, in the Governor's budget proposal, he is proposing to reduce the amount the state will fund for burying an indigent person from \$1,400.00 to \$1,000.00. Last year, the State of CT reduced this cost from \$1,800.00 to \$1,400.00. I contacted a few funeral home directors. I was told that \$1,000 would not be enough to properly bury someone, except for possibly a simple cremation. However, for some individuals and their families cremation is not an option because of their religious beliefs. In Connecticut, whether it is a person of means or someone who is a pauper, that person should be able to be buried in a dignified and compassionate way. This reduction could prevent that from happening.



We are better than that. On behalf of my low income elderly clients, I strongly oppose this proposed cut.

Third, the Governor proposes to merge the Home and Community Based Services unit and Protective Services for the Elderly. These two units housed within the Department of Social Services have different missions and roles. It does not make sense to merge them and could lead to poor decisions based on competing and possibly conflicting purposes.

Fourth, while we recognize that there are many competing fiscal interests, we would support a restoration of funds to cap the amount the dually eligible (those on Medicare and Medicaid) pay for Part D drugs. The cap was \$15.00 a month.

Thank you for considering the needs of Connecticut's most vulnerable seniors.