

Testimony Regarding the Governor's Budget Recommendation on the  
Legislative Commission on Aging  
HB 5044  
Appropriations Committee  
Public Hearing  
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Submitted by:  
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Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Sherry Ostrout. I am a Hartford resident. I am the Director of Government Initiatives at Connecticut Community Care, Inc. (CCCI). And, I have served as a volunteer member and Chair of this legislature's Commission on Aging.

The Legislative Commission on Aging is one of the richest assets this legislature has. CT's aging population is growing by leaps and bounds (while the younger population is decreasing). From 2010-2040, the older adult population will increase by 57%. We are already seeing the growing demand for long-term services and supports, a growing need that will exceed current capacity. We are already challenged by the rising expenditures in Medicaid and State dollars toward long-term care across the spectrum. The challenges are enormous but Connecticut has begun the process of change.

The Commission's research and analysis is invaluable. In fact, if you look in the footnotes of any substantive report about CT specific aging policy – you will see the work of the Commission on Aging. This past year, per Public Act 15-236, the Commission created a web portal to help financial agents learn how to prevent and detect financial abuse and exploitation of older adults, and conducted a comprehensive study concerning best practices for reporting and identification of abuse, neglect, exploitation and abandonment of older adults, complete with 15 policy recommendations.

It has staffed the Aging in Place Task Force, Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Task Force, Grandparents Visitation Rights Task Force and Senior Safety Task Force, all legislative initiatives that are improving lives. The Commission has also brought together philanthropy, municipal elected officials and employees, legislators and executive branch program leaders (such as those spearheading Money Follows the Person, of whose Steering Committee the Commission on Aging has been Chair) to begin a conversation about creating livable communities for all ages. In a State that has 169 independently governed towns and cities, with unique charm, culture and politics – this is a challenge. But the Commission on Aging continues to successfully facilitate community livability at state, regional and local levels.

Money Follows the Person (administered by Department of Social Services), the largest systems change project in CT's history, is shifting support and services to the

community and away from costly institutional care. The Commission on Aging served, for five years, as the impartial facilitator to Money Follows the Person public stakeholder advisory group, affirming the distinct roles and authority of the Legislative Branch and the Executive Branch of government, ensuring transparency, accountability and that public input remains meaningful.

And, with this shift to community care for a booming aging population, the home and community personal care workforce is inadequate to meet demand, unprepared and fragmented. Again, the Commission on Aging continues to bring together workforce development organizations, investment boards, community colleges, consumers, employers and State Departments.

This Legislative Commission on Aging has saved the state millions of dollars through their research and recommendations. If they have failed at anything, it is self-promotion. The CT Commission on Aging is a unique leadership office, impartial and brings dedicated focus to aging issues in the state. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.