



Community Renewal Team

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**Testimony of Gariann Chiarella
Director of Nutrition Services for Community Renewal Team
to the Committee on Aging
HB 7072: An Act Increasing Funding for Elderly Nutrition Services**

February 19, 2019

Senator James Maroney, Representative Joseph Serra, Senator Gary Winfield, Representative John Hampton, Senator Kevin Kelly, Representative David Wilson and members of the Committee on Aging:

My name is Gariann Chiarella, and I am the Director of Nutrition Services for the Community Renewal Team (CRT), the designated community action agency for both Hartford and Middlesex Counties; and a member of the Connecticut Association of Nutrition and Aging Service Providers (CANASP) – the nine regional providers of Elderly Nutrition Programs (ENPs) throughout the state. I am here to offer my written testimony in support of HB 7072.

On behalf of CRT and the elderly population that we serve, we truly appreciate the Committee on Aging's recognition of the problems posed by stagnant funding and the adverse impact that this will have on the delivery of meals to home-bound seniors through Meals on Wheels here in Connecticut.

You clearly understand the importance of community-based services including Meals on Wheels and the positive impact that those services have on keeping seniors healthy and independent in their own homes.

It is worth noting that in 1973 CRT established the first Elderly Nutrition Program in Connecticut, serving meals at eight centers located in Hartford. Today, we continue to serve thousands of meals every day to seniors throughout Central Connecticut, both at community cafes (Congregate sites) in senior centers and through our Meals on Wheels program.

From our perspective, we are continuing to see tremendous demand for these nutrition services from seniors throughout Central Connecticut. Last year, our Elderly Nutrition Program, through both our Congregate meals program and our Meals on Wheels program provided more than 550,000 meals to seniors. In January of this year, our Meals on Wheels program delivered more than 27,000 meals just in Hartford County, and we are typically receiving 45 – 60 new inquiries from individuals seeking to receive these home-meal delivery services each month.

We heartily support the proposal of this legislation to “increase the fee schedule for Meals on Wheels provided under the Connecticut home-care program for the elderly by ten per cent over the fee schedule for Meals on Wheels for the previous fiscal year,” effective July 1, 2019.

Under the Connecticut home-care program for the elderly, this increase in funding will enable CRT and other providers of Meals on Wheels throughout the state of Connecticut to continue our programs serving hearty, nutritious meals to home-bound seniors, and will help to offset our costs to manage this important program.

At our current rate of reimbursement we have not taken on new third party clients for over a year. Our current third party payers are not covering the cost of delivering meals and our need for additional space on our vehicles for Title III clients is increasing. If this proposed funding increase does not occur, we may have to look at our ratio of CHCPE meals vs. Title III meals per truck, and start to reduce the number of CHCPE clients that we serve. We truly hope that will not be necessary.

On behalf of the seniors that we serve, thank you very much for your support of this vital nutrition program.

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