

LifeBridge Testimony
Aging Committee Public Hearing

February 19, 2019

HB 7072: An Act Increasing Funding for Elderly Nutrition Services

To the members of the Aging Committee, my name is Erin Harkrader and I write on behalf of LifeBridge Community Services in support of HB 7072.

LifeBridge is one of the nine Elderly Nutrition Programs in Connecticut, covering the Greater New Haven area. We currently serve over 1,000 clients per year, many of whom are covered under the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders (CHCPE). Unfortunately, stagnant funding under CHCPE has challenged our program and others to continue providing the level of service that is so important for Connecticut seniors. It has been shown time and again that Home Delivered Meals help to keep seniors out of hospitals and nursing homes, and offers a huge cost savings over traditional institutionalization. While reimbursement has remained largely flat over the past 10 years, the costs to our program have increased. Food costs continue to go up yearly, and additional staffing and infrastructure costs have left us in a shortfall. Copays received for the meals go to CHCPE, rather than augmenting the reimbursement for meals. Every meal served to a CHCPE client results in a net loss to our program.

Demand for Home Delivered Meals continues to increase every day. Clients who have been switched to other Home Delivered Meal providers continue to ask to come back to LifeBridge. Through daily home visits, our drivers ensure that clients are secure in their homes, and we can alert a care manager if a client is in distress. The value of our program and others like ours cannot be overstated. Without our program, many seniors would not be able to stay in their homes.

By increasing the reimbursement for meals through CHCPE and having a continual increase codified, it would allow programs like ours to make important capital investments, improve and innovate, and ensure the continued exemplary level of service to CHCPE clients.

Thank you for your support of our program, and this bill.