



Celebrating 40+ Years of Dedication to Representing the Concerns of Connecticut's Aging Adults

**Testimony of Peaches C. Quinn, M.P.H., President
Connecticut Coalition on Aging (CCOA)
Submitted to the Aging Committee
Tuesday, February 19, 2019**

Re:

H.B. No. 7071 (Raised)- An Act Providing an Income Tax Deduction for Individuals Caring for Elderly Persons, Children or Disabled Persons

H.B. No. 7072 (Raised) -An Act Increasing Funding for Elderly Nutrition Services

S.B. No. 832 (Raised)- An Act Concerning Registries of Persons Found responsible for Assaults or Other Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation or Abandonment of Elderly Persons or Persons with Disabilities.

Greetings Committee Chairs: Senator James Maroney and Representative Joseph Serra; Vice Chairs and ranking, esteemed members of the Aging Committee. My name is Peaches Quinn. I am president of the Connecticut Coalition on Aging, the State's oldest advocacy and public education group. For more than 40 years CCOA has represented the concerns of older adults, especially the state's frail elderly.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the following raised bills:

H.B. No. 7071 (Raised) - An Act Providing an Income Tax Deduction for Individuals Caring for Elderly Persons, Children or Disabled Persons

This is a Bill that has been raised repeatedly in recent years. The potential loss of tax revenue undoubtedly precipitates its defeat. We believe, as other community leaders do, that "Aging in Place", requires supporting family caregivers. They are the most vital of unpaid resources. Numbering approximately 500,000 in our state, family caregivers account for more than \$6 billion annually in contributions. Please refer to the very relevant January 2016 Report to the CT General Assembly by the State's Long Term Care Planning Committee, called "Balancing the System: Working Toward Real Choice for Long-Term Services and Supports". This report documents not only the financial contribution of family caregivers, but also projects the ever growing workforce shortage of homecare workers that continues to put more burden on the informal system. If Connecticut is serious about "Aging in Place", this bill would be a huge achievement toward helping families maintain their self reliance and the State's goal to hold back additional Medicaid cost .

H.B. No. 7072 (Raised) -An Act Increasing Funding for Elderly Nutrition Services
Adequate, secure nutrition is an underpinning of Aging in Place infrastructure. CCOA supports the passage of this bill because it demonstrates commitment to supporting a person's decision to remain at home versus institutionalization. Unfortunately , Meals on Wheels has been operating in an economy that has had a CPI increase of more than 13%

for more than 10 years. At the same time funding streams have dwindled, yielding a recent shortfall of more than \$1 million that is both real and staggering. Providers have pitched in to absorb costs, but the program will not sustain that way. Meals have been cut back, some programs have had to close leaving many, with serious medical issues, without food delivery. Unconscionable. The proposed 10% increase to the CHCPE meals program would most assuredly stabilize funding of the program. We ask that you please support this bill.

S.B. No. 832 (Raised)- An Act Concerning Registries of Persons Found Responsible for Assaults or Other Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation or Abandonment of Elderly Persons or Persons with Disabilities.

Both CCOA and the Ageism Advisory Committee of the South Central Agency on Aging whole heartedly support the passage of this bill, because it would provide a long needed statewide registry of persons convicted of abuse to older adults and persons with disabilities.

Abuse appears in many forms from intimidation or fraud to unthinkable sexual abuse or life threatening personal injury. It is time for Connecticut to join the ranks of other states that have established adult abuse registries (e.g. Delaware, Idaho, Kansas, Ohio, Nebraska, Tennessee). Reasons include:

- Abuse is a social justice problem of huge proportion and magnitude that has generally been addressed from the view of preventive education and removing the victim. While we concur with the need for those services and supports, and applaud this Committee for the 2015 bill that specifies reporting requirements as well as consequences for not reporting abuse incidents, we believe strengthening protection with appropriate penalties will contribute a deterring effect.
- Fraud and exploitation, aided by technology, is increasing in kind and magnitude. Scams are more sophisticated and often invented and carried out by persons who count on no one finding out.
- Workforce shortages put greater burden on family caregivers to be self reliant until exhaustion or crisis occur. When help is brought in (e.g. for respite or part time assistance) caregivers, for affordability reasons, look to hire non agency workers in which case a specific, easily accessible, criminal background tool is not available.

We ask all AGING COMMITTEE members to champion this bill. It a measure that will showcase Connecticut's pro active efforts to protect vulnerable adults' safety and well being .