Testimony on HB 5115 An Act Concerning an Asset Test for Medicare Savings Program (MSP)

My name is Amber Hutton. I am grateful to have the opportunity to express my concerns regarding the proposed asset test for the MSP. I am a Service Coordinator for a senior building in Bridgeport with approximately 138 tenants.

I have been a SHIP counselor since 2006 so I have seen the evolution and changes in the MSP through the years. When I first started as a SHIP counselor there was an asset test of about $5000. I assisted a 75 year old woman who felt she had to drop her life insurance policy. She had that policy for many, many years. She was afraid of how it would affect her MSP coverage. Previously, she had lost the MSP for a few weeks because there was confusion regarding the final value as opposed to the actual cash value. The issue was resolved but the woman said she was tired of dealing with it and decided she might as well just cancel it because eventually the cash value could reach the $5000 limit anyway. She turned it in for the little she could get for it and lost the majority of what she had paid for through the years. She said she felt ashamed that her children would now have to either bury her on their own or just cremate her and be done with it. This was not something she wanted. It’s why she got the policy in the first place. I would hate to see things like this happen again.

While I understand the issue for the need to cut expense. I also fear that legislators don’t overlook important details when considering options. As with the proposed cuts to the MSP, CT limits are being compared to other states with lower cost of living and that’s not realistic. I am not opposed to an asset test but the one proposed is too
extreme. The asset test for the Home Care Program for Elders at the State funded level is more reasonable at $37,936 individual and $50,568 for a couple. That program has a similar purpose to the MSP allowing individuals in need to have care that will allow them to remain in the community and caring for themselves in a way that may reduce the need to pay more for healthcare later.

I also hope that the MSP application will remain as self-declaration and the redetermination processes will continue to be a passive renewal. These factors can affect the processing great. Changing this can cause delays in benefits and add more stress in a system that is already stretched and currently needs more workers and better processing. The wait time on a phone call to DSS is evidence of this. Thank you for your time and consideration.