

# Aging Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-561

AN ACT RAISING THE PERSONAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE FOR CERTAIN

**Title:** LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENTS.

**Vote Date:** 2/20/2019

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 2/14/2019

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Aging Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

The bill increases the Personal needs allowance of residents of long term care facilities from \$60 to \$72. According to officials, \$60 a month is not nearly enough to cover the costs of personal needs items such as toiletries, snacks, haircuts, etc, and that an increase in the personal needs allowance will allow seniors more purchasing power for bare necessities.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Connecticut Department of Social Services:** Opposes the bill. The agency testified that the current level of \$60 for the personal needs allowance is above the average for states in the northeast and is \$30 above the federal minimum. The agency stated that they oppose the increase in the PNA due to the negative impact it would have on the state's budget.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**AARP Connecticut:** Testified about how there has not been an increase in the personal needs allowance for senior citizens since 2011, and stated that increasing the personal needs allowance will allow institutionalized individuals to better meet their personal needs and can allow seniors to maintain a level of independence and dignity.

**Mag Morelli, LeadingAge Connecticut:** Ms. Morelli testified that the personal needs allowance can enhance the experience and quality of life of a resident of a skilled nursing facility and commended the committee for seeking an increase in the current level of \$72.

**Kathy Null-Volunteer AARP- Bridgewater:** Ms. Null testified that many residents in nursing homes do not get regular visitors, and therefore they must pay for simple necessities themselves. She stated that residents have expressed concern to her about acquiring bare necessities.

**Malread Painter, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, State of Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services:** Testified about how the General Assembly voted to decrease the personal needs allowance temporarily in 2010. Also stated that \$60 a month is not enough to cover basic expenses, and how residents of nursing homes often have nothing to use to pay for “individual quality of life expenses”. Ms. Painter also acknowledged the state’s current financial constraints but asks for consideration since this has been a temporary reduction in place since 2010.

**Peaches C. Quinn, President, Connecticut Coalition on Aging:** Testified about how purchasing personal items and services are the last amount of independence that most residents in nursing homes have and urged the committee to move the proposal through appropriations.

**James L. Young, Jr., Vice-Chair, Elder Law Section, Connecticut Bar Association:** Mr. Young testified about how the cost of living has increased since 2011 which was when the changes to Personal Needs Allowance took effect. He testified how the cost of living and the cost of nursing home care are among the highest in the country. He also acknowledged that budget challenges that the state currently faces and testified that the PNA increase would only be a “modest additional burden.”

**Marie Allen, Executive Director, Southwestern CT Agency on Aging:** Ms. Allen testified in support of the increase of the personal needs allowance from \$60 to \$72. She stated that the increase would support the quality of life and purchasing ability for items of comfort for residents in facilities.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Expressed for Proposed Bill No. 561

**Reported by: Avarice Jacovino**

**Date: 2/25/2019**