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Aging Committee  
February 9, 2021  
Zoom 2:00 PM

In **SUPPORT** of Raised Bill 814  
*An Act Establishing A Task Force to Review Voluntarism Needs  
of the State Ombudsman*

Chairman Slap, Chairman Phipps, and distinguished members of the Aging Committee, I am here to testify in **support** of Raised Bill 814, *An Act Establishing a Task Force to Review Voluntarism Needs of the State Ombudsman*.

For the transcript, my name is Cathy Osten and I represent the 19<sup>th</sup> Senate District, which includes the towns of Columbia, Franklin, Hebron, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lisbon, Marlborough, Montville, Norwich, and Sprague. I appreciate you considering this legislation for the second consecutive year.

Over the years, I have visited with several constituents throughout my district and heard many concerns raised by numerous nursing home residents. I believe a task force is needed to determine how to replenish volunteers in the state's Ombudsman program. Volunteers are needed in order to reach nursing home residents and relay their needs to the State Ombudsman. One such volunteer expressed that in some cases, nursing home residents may not have family members who can help them and are in need of an advocate. This volunteer may be the only connection to outside help for nursing home residents. This volunteer also noted that the number of volunteers has decreased in recent years, as she sees it, due to a number of reasons. One constituent with 15 years of experience as a volunteer noted that there were 156 volunteers in 2003, then 20 in 2016, and at present only 12. This volunteer group covers about 229 nursing homes and approximately 24,000 residents.

As you may know, this volunteer position requires comprehensive training of four days, a monthly report to the Ombudsman, and a checklist that must be followed. Such an involved volunteer position is in need of increased support, and should be more highly

valued, which would be an additional discussion. This labor-intensive position can also be highly rewarding, and perhaps more individuals would be interested in the position if they were aware of its existence.

A task force may study the ways in which this volunteer position is being advertised and how to continue reaching out to recruit in a more effective way. One constituent also noted that training for this volunteer opportunity is only held in Hartford when there are a certain number of applicants, and that at times potential volunteers are not notified whether or not their application has been received. A task force may study how the management and training of volunteers may contribute to increased applicants and a higher rate of retention.

Another constituent expressed that a task force might be effective in the study of voluntarism needs. She also noted the transitions occurring in long-term care, and how the shift toward more home and community-based services may result in an expanded scope for the Ombudsman's office in the future.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of Raised Bill 814. I look forward to working with the leadership and members of this committee on this bill's passage.