

# Aging Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-812

AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

**Title:** RESPITE CARE PROGRAM.

**Vote Date:** 2/16/2021

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

**PH Date:** 2/9/2021

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Aging Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

Currently a significant portion of the state's Alzheimer's residents are cared for at their homes by friends and family. The respite care programs give these principal caregivers a break and continues to provide the services required for the Alzheimer's residents. The toll taken on caregivers can be devastating, and this bill would expand access to the Alzheimer's disease respite care program by raising income and asset eligibility limits.

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

**Senator Paul Formica, Connecticut General Assembly:** He offered testimony in support of this legislation. He points out that Alzheimer's disease debilitating and painful, not only to those who suffer from it, but also to the patients' loved ones. He believes our goal is to alleviate the pain of everyone who is dealing with this disease.

**Amy Porter, Commissioner, Dept. of Aging and Disability Services:** They don't not support this bill. They believe that there may be some confusion about the monetary thresholds for eligibility for this program. They point out that the statute in question (Sec. 17-b-349e says the income limit is \$109,000 and this bill will increase the income limit to \$50,000 and the asset limit to \$127,000. They note that the statute also tells the agency in increase the income and asset limits annually in line with the Social Security COLA so that on July 1, 2021 the income limit will grow to \$48,266 and the asset limit will grow to \$128,321. In fact, the bill would increase the income limit only slightly and actually decrease the asset limit. They also advise that increasing the program's eligibility limits cannot be done without hurting those with the greatest financial need.

**Michael Werner, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity:** There testimony was offered in support of this proposal. Due to Connecticut's expanding aging population there is a need for better support for people with Alzheimer's disease.

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

**Mag Morelli, President, LeadAge Connecticut:** They are in support of this bill and would support any effort to increase funding to ensure that those currently enrolled can continue to receive an adequate level of care as well as expanding enrollment to increase the number of persons who would be able to receive respite services. They do say that funding for this program is capped and if eligibility is expanded without an increase in funding current recipients will receive less funding and fewer services. Since this is the case, they ask that any expansion of eligibility include an increase in the funding for the program.

**Christy Kovel, Director, Alzheimer's Association Connecticut Chapter:** They support this bill and note that the proposed income and asset levels in the proposal are close to the current income and asset levels for the program and an expansion of eligibility with increased and adequate funding is good policy and supports a person's wish to age in place with dignity.

**Marie Allen, Director, Connecticut Assoc. of Area Agencies on Aging:** They are supportive of this proposal but point out that increased eligibility without an increase in funds available to the program may result in reduced care plans and potential safety issues for vulnerable elders.

**Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO, The Connecticut Assoc. for Healthcare at Home:** They offer their support for this bill and say that in-home services are preferred over institutional care and are a savings vehicle for the State.

**AARP Connecticut:** They are in support of this bill since the program provides much needed relief to the family caregivers who take care of their loved ones at home, but they point out that without an increase in funding expanded eligibility would result in reduced services.

**Mike Sopchak, Volunteer, AARP Northford:** They support this legislation and suggest that in addition to increasing eligibility that sufficient funds be provided to protect current beneficiaries and expand services to newly eligible families. Without an increase in funding for the program, increased eligibility would mean reduced services for those who rely on the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program for support.

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

No testimony in opposition was submitted.

**Reported by: Richard Ferrari, Assistant Clerk  
Richard O'Neil, Assistant Clerk  
Joe Perkus, Clerk**

**Date: 3/9/21**

