

# Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-946

AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT HOME-CARE PROGRAM FOR

**Title:** THE ELDERLY.

**Vote Date:** 3/16/2023

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

**PH Date:** 2/7/2023

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Human Services Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

There are more than 460,000 family caregivers in Connecticut that provide complex care to their loved ones at home and often have some degree of financial impact. Currently, spouses are not compensated for providing care to their loved ones. In addition to spouses playing an important role in a loved one's life, the need for social workers being involved consistently in the management of services and mental well-being of the clients ensures that these individuals are receiving the best care and services needed. Through the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Elderly (CHCPE), this bill will compensate spouses and family caregivers for providing full-time care to their loved ones.

## **SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:**

The substitute language removes provisions requiring Medicaid coverage for up to 2 social worker visits. Coverage of family caregivers, including spouses, were added to the bill. Additionally, changes were made from "elderly foster care" to "adult family living". The co-pay provision was also reduced from 3 to 2 percent.

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

**The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity (CWCSEO);** supports this bill stating that currently multi-generational, at home family care is noteworthy aspect amongst the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. It is stated an expanding eligibility and compensation for family caregivers will assist in meeting the needs to the older adults within this community. It is suggested that along with the passage of this

bill, there are efforts to raise awareness and educate various communities about family caregiver programs.

**Department of Social Services (DSS), Commissioner, Andrea Barton-Reeves;** opposes this bill stating the proposed expansion to reimburse spouses providing personal care would result in significantly increased costs that are not supported in the Department's budget. It is also stated that increasing visits by a licensed social worker to two will increase annual costs for the Medicaid waiver program.

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

**All Pointe Home Care, Co-Owner, Coco Sellman;** supports this bill, but believes there should not be a limit to two social work visits per participant within CHCPE. It is suggested that a home health Medicaid social work rate for both waiver and non-waiver Medicaid patients be implemented as well.

**AARP, State Director, Anna Doroghazi;** supports this bill stating expanding opportunities for paid family caregivers can help states ensure they have adequate caregiving resources to meet rising demand. It is stated that allowing family caregivers to be compensated for taking care of their loved ones expands the pool of available caregivers and frees up more of the limited professional direct care workforce. It is also stated that other states have successfully allowed caregivers to provide paid care to their loved ones and this bill will help make that a reality in Connecticut.

**Center for Disability Rights, CEO, Marc Anthony Gallucci;** supports this bill stating how critical the role of a social worker has on patients. It is stated that allowing spouses to be compensated for providing care to loved ones gives them the chance to remain at home and not placed in a nursing facility.

**Healthcare at Home, President, Tracy Wodatch;** supports this bill, but states there should not be a limit to two social work visits per participant within CHCPE. It is suggested that a home health Medicaid social work rate for both waiver and non-waiver Medicaid patients be implemented as well.

**Infinity Home Health, LMSW, Shaina Wilkinson;** supports this bill stating the importance of social work and how they are supportive of the nursing staff. It is stated that social workers have not been able to visit patients in their home due to lack of Medicaid coverage for a social work visit. It is suggested that a home health Medicaid social work rate for both waiver and non-waiver Medicaid patients be implemented.

**Masonicare, LCSW, Rebecca Tamsin;** supports this bill stating the importance of social work visits for patients to ensure that patients receive the services they need and that they can remain at home. It is stated the state will benefit through cost savings as patients are more likely to stay out of the hospital and nursing homes.

**Seniorlink and Caregiver Homes, Senior Vice President, Rachel Richards;** supports this bill sharing how there is a shortage of home and community-based workers causing family members and friends to take on the caregiver role. It is stated that family caregivers do

receive compensation, but not spouses. It is also stated that spouses play an important role in their significant others life and are high motivated to provide quality care to their loved one.

**One person submitted testimony anonymously in support to this bill.**

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Connecticut Community Care, President, Julia Evans Starr;** opposes this bill stating that CHCPE participants receive care management and transitional services in their array of services. It is stated that care managers asses the needs of their clients, create care plans, and connect their client to community services and support. It is also stated that family caregivers are being compensated for providing care for their loved ones. It is suggested that the main challenge are capacity issues where the home and community-based provider network is still dealing from the effect of the pandemic and focusing on equitable reimbursement rates will address service gaps.

**Southwestern CT Agency on Aging, President, Marie Allen;** opposes this bill stating CHCPE currently offers mental health counseling as part of its service to its clients and are supported by highly trained care managers. It is stated that having an equitable reimbursement rate will support providers in the Medicaid filed and allowing spouses to be compensated for providing care may unfavorably cause some families to exceed maximum Medicaid income and assets for beneficiaries. It is also stated that the Adult Family Living service through CHCPE provides a stipend to eligible family members with the support of nursing and supervisory services to create a care plan that is safe for the client.

**Reported by: Kelly Houston**

**Date: March 28, 2023**