

**Connecticut State Unit on Aging Written Testimony
Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act
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I want to thank Assistant Secretary Greenlee for the opportunity to provide written comments on the Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. This is a summary of and follow-up to Margaret Gerundo-Murkette's oral testimony provided on February 25, 2010 in Alexandria, VA.

As we know, the baby boom generation is bringing an exponential increase in the older population; these changes coupled with the challenges of a struggling economy make the Older Americans Act a significant source of programming now more than ever before.

Local Reauthorization Listening Sessions

In anticipation of the Reauthorization, the SUA recently sponsored four Listening Sessions at senior centers and talked with 185 older adults. We will continue these listening sessions beyond March but submit the information that we have gathered thus far with this response. Comments we received from participants include challenges with access, transportation, legal assistance, and financial assistance. The Long Term Care Needs Assessment completed by the University of Connecticut in 2007 found that the vast majority of consumers want to remain in their own homes with homecare services and supports as necessary. We heard "loud and clear" at these sessions that people want to stay in their homes but need supports.

Below are our key recommendations at this time, with details provided on cost sharing, the legal services developer position, and Title IV demonstration projects including ADRCs. We hope to receive input from our aging network and provide more recommendations before the end of March.

Our Key Recommendations

- **Make select Title IV Demonstration programs a permanent part of the Act's Core Programs including Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Community Living Program, Evidence-Based Prevention Programs, Model Approaches to Legal Assistance for Elders, and SMP with appropriate, sustainable, funding**
- **Add Evidenced-Based Prevention Programs under an expanded Title IIID**
- **Add mental health initiatives under an expanded Title IIID**
- **Support consumer-directed efforts under the National Family Caregiver Support Program, allowing funding for the fiscal intermediary services that accompany these initiatives**
- **Offer Cost Sharing as an option for more Title III programs, including Nutrition**
- **Fund Chapter 4 of Title VII**

Make select Title IV Demonstration programs a permanent part of the Act's Core Programs

Connecticut has found great success with many of the recent AoA discretionary grants especially Community Living Program (CLP), ADRC, Evidence-Based Prevention Programs, and Model Approaches to Statewide Legal Assistance for Elders as well as the more established demonstration grant, SMP. Each of these grants should be considered as permanent part of the Act's core programs, with appropriate funding to sustain these projects.

The 2006 revisions to the Act supports ADRCs and provided the Assistant Secretary for Aging the authority to implement ADRCs in all states. It is important to integrate ADRCs into the core initiatives of the Act. In a separate section of the Act, such a provision should provide appropriate language which can promote the goals and objectives of these centers and funding to meet these objectives, and will help each state to appropriately target needed services.

AoA envisions that ADRCs will serve all individuals with long-term care needs regardless of their age or disability; however, funding through the Act is limited to providing services to those persons age 60 and over. We can only effectively integrate the full range of long-term supports and services into a single, coordinated system with additional provisions to service those persons currently not eligible under the Act, as was done for the Family Caregiver Program, to recognize populations under 60.

Offer Cost Sharing as an option for more Title III programs, including Nutrition

While the Act's service mission has dramatically increased, the resources to cover it has not and limitations on cost-sharing remain. In these tough economic times, it is time to reevaluate the cost sharing provisions of the Act. Using the benefit to nutrition services as an example, states could be permitted to implement cost sharing for meals with a sliding scale based solely on individual income and the cost of delivering services. With cost sharing under the Act, no one who is eligible is denied a service. The additional funds from cost sharing could help provide additional services and support the program, particularly after ARRA funding has ended.

Fund Chapter 4 of Title VII

With the added emphasis on creating comprehensive elder justice systems, it is important to begin funding Chapter 4 of Title VII which mandates each state to have a Legal Assistance Developer to provide a state focal point for elder rights development and provision of legal assistance. This important chapter provides for strong statewide leadership and coordination of the legal services delivery systems and elder justice activities which are integral to creating such a system.

With changes to the Act, we want to continue to make significant strides toward our primary goal of providing older adults with access to the supportive services necessary to live with dignity, security and independence.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to provide these comments.