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**Written Testimony of
 The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
 Before the
 Select Committee on Aging
 Tuesday, January 27, 2009**

In Support of:

S.B. 453, AAC Financial Assistance to the State's Assisted Living Pilot Projects

H.B. 5311, AAC Increasing Temporary Family Assistance Benefits for Caretaker Relatives

Senator Prague, Representative Serra and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony in support of S.B. 453 which would increase the enrollment in the State's assisted living pilot projects from 75 to 150 persons, and H.B. 5311 which would increase financial support to caretaker relatives.

S.B. 453, AAC Financial Assistance to the State's Assisted Living Pilot Projects

Assisted living is the fastest growing type of senior housing in the United States with an estimated 15% to 20% annual growth rate over the last few years.¹ According to the National Association for Assisted Living, 76% of those in assisted living are female and 24% are men.² The typical assisted living resident is an 86-year-old woman who is mobile, but needs assistance with approximately two activities of daily living.³

According to an AARP survey,⁴ of which over half of the respondents were female, Connecticut seniors would prefer to be in an assisted living setting rather than a nursing home. However, the majority are not confident that they could afford assisted living and would support the Legislature making assisted living more affordable for low- and middle-income people, even if it means an increase in taxes. Fifty-five percent strongly support and 25% somewhat support the Legislature making assisted living more affordable for low and middle-income people, even if it means an increase in taxes.

¹ AARP. *Connecticut Assisted Living Survey, 2002.*

² The National Association for Assisted Living. <<http://www.ncal.org>>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ AARP. *Connecticut Assisted Living Survey, 2002.*

H.B. 5311, AAC Increasing Temporary Family Assistance Benefits for Caretaker Relatives

Millions of older Americans have assumed responsibility to care for grandchildren and other related children whose parents are unable or unwilling to provide for them. Whether the need arises due to parental illness, incarceration, substance and alcohol abuse, child abuse or military service, grandparent and relative caregivers step in and become responsible for most of the basic needs of the children. These caretakers provide a critical safety net to six million children who might otherwise find themselves in the child welfare system. Many of these caregivers are elderly and in poor health, on limited income, and ill-equipped to handle the stresses associated with caring for children who may have social, emotional, health and educational issues.⁵

Nationally, of grandparents raising grandchildren, 1.6 million are grandmothers and 896,000 are grandfathers.⁶ Of this population, 1.4 million are in the labor force, and have median incomes of \$42,111.⁷ If parents of the grandchildren are not present, the median income dropped to \$31,405.⁸

In Connecticut, there are 39,797 children living in grandparent-headed households and another 12,406 children living in households heading by other relatives – totaling 52,203 children or 6.2% of all children in the state.⁹ Of the 18,898 grandparents who report that they are caring for their grandchildren, 16.5 live in poverty.¹⁰ This population is racially diverse with 2% Asian, 19% Hispanic, 29% African-American, and 47% white.¹¹

Eligible grandparents and caretakers could receive benefits to care for these children - on average \$344 a month for one child from the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program, or \$746 to \$875 for one child from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) program.¹² The DCF program provides **\$402 to \$531 more** than the TFA program to care for a similarly situated child. By equalizing the payment standards, the State would provide equal assistance to all caretakers who are raising the children that they have taken into their home.

We look forward to working with you to address these important issues. Thank you for your consideration.

⁵ National Council of State Legislators. 9/08 <<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/KinshipCare.htm>>.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. 9/08 <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/users_guide/index.htm>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ AARP Foundation. *Connecticut GrandFacts*, October 2007. 9/08 <http://www.grandparentfactsheets.org/state_fact_sheets.cfm>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Office of Legislative Research Report. *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, 2008-R-0048, January 31, 2008.