

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1300
AN ACT CONCERNING COMPENSATING SPOUSES FOR STATE-FUNDED
Title: HOME CARE.
Vote Date: 3/5/2025
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 2/20/2025
File No.: 105

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Gary A. Turco, 27th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

To address both the staffing shortages of personal care assistants (PCA's) and a population that is increasing in age in the state of CT, SB-1300 will allow individuals enrolled in the state-funded portion of the CT Home Care Program for the Elderly (CHCPE) to "age in place", remaining with family members in the comfort and familiarity of their own homes. This bill intends to provide training, resources and compensation for spouses who perform the personal care assistance to individuals enrolled in CHCPE. Currently spouses and conservators are not eligible to receive this compensation through DSS.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Connecticut Department of Social Services \(DSS\), Deputy Commissioner, Shantelle Varrs](#): currently prohibits spouses, conservators, and parents of minor children from being paid caregivers. DSS has a long-standing position that there is a conflict of interest when the spouse that participates in the healthcare decision-making has an opportunity for financial gain in providing that care, therefore it is the position of DSS to not recommend extending payments to spouses, conservators, or legally liable relatives. This proposed expansion to reimburse spouses or other individuals providing personal care is expected to result in a significant cost increase of at least \$22 million in state funding when fully annualized.

Kathleen Holt, Acting Healthcare Advocate for the State of CT, from the Office of the Healthcare Advocate (OHA): provides supporting testimony that CT has an aging population and primary caregivers often sacrifice their own careers, resources and financial stability to care for their loved ones. SB-1300 would help relieve caregiver anxiety and encourage individuals and couples to “age in place”, leading to better quality of care and support, while also decreasing the pressure on skilled nursing and long-term care facilities and providing substantial savings to CT’s healthcare system.

The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity (CWSEO): supports the bill with additional considerations and inclusions. CWSEO recommends expanding the program to include participants in the Adult Family Living Program through Medicaid and further recommends that any expansion of the program be structured to be exempt from existing benefit eligibility so as not to trigger a benefit cliff.

The State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, Mairead Painter: provided similar supporting testimony in favor of SB-1300 and noted that this bill would promote choice and independence at the highest level and allow individuals to receive care from the persons they trust the most while remaining comfortable in their home setting.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Southwestern CT Agency on Aging, President (and on behalf of Aging CT), Marie Allen: supports SB-1300 recognizing that financial support reduces the economic burden faced by low-income families and adds support to the caregiver industry, already vulnerable to staff shortages. Aging CT asks that compensation be exempt from calculations for financial eligibility so that additional income poses no threat to current eligibility maximums.

The CT Association For Healthcare At Home, President and CEO, Tracy Wodatch: provides similar supporting testimony that recognizes the need for more caregivers in CT and the benefits of patients remaining in their home with a friend or family member. The current model does not allow for compensation to a spouse acting as a PCA.

SUPPORTS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

Careforth, a Ct-based Adult Family Living Provider, Director Government Relations, Lori Sims: supports the bill with the following changes, narrowing of the scope of the bill to focus specifically on the service that allows family caregivers within the HCBS for Elders Waiver, particularly Adult Family Living. Additionally, that spousal reimbursement be allocated for Medicaid rather than State-Funded services. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) regularly provide guidance to states on how to amend their Medicaid HCBS waivers to include spouse caregivers.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None offered.

Reported by: Chris Reddy

Date: 3/24/2025