

**TESTIMONY OF  
EMELIE SCONING AND GLADYS MONTGOMERY  
AARP PENNSYLVANIA**

**ON LONG-TERM CARE REBALANCING**

**BEFORE THE SENATE AGING AND YOUTH  
COMMITTEE**

**APRIL 8, 2008**

**HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA**

We appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Senate Aging and Youth Committee today. I am Gladys Montgomery and with me is Emelie Sconing. We are volunteers with AARP Pennsylvania, representing our 1.9 million members in the Commonwealth.

You're listening to a lot of important information today concerning home and community based care. There are many statistics on the costs, comparisons between what Pennsylvania is doing and what is taking place on this issue in other states, and descriptions of the services and the impact of the budget on these services. This is all necessary information as you attempt to work on this issue and determine how our state budget can address these needs.

But as an organization that represents many older Pennsylvanians, we wanted to discuss the impact of this issue on individuals. We know most of you have faced tough decisions on how to care for loved ones in your own families, so the story I'm about to tell won't be shocking. But it does demonstrate why this issue is so important – not only to older Pennsylvanians who need care, but to their families who are forced to make decisions when there is no good solution to their problem.

As is so often the case in Pennsylvania, this story begins with an older woman living by herself. She enjoys her independence, but is finding it to be more difficult to keep up with maintaining a home on her own. Her children help the best they can, but when she becomes ill and is hospitalized, there are decisions to be made.

Her daughter finally decides the best course of action is to have her mother move in with her. At this point, the mother's home was put up for sale. Her mother's only income is Social Security. Because the daughter and her husband both work and mother is not well enough to be on her own, arrangements are made with the local Area Agency on Aging for some assistance. But the Area Agency on Aging soon informs them that they simply aren't able to provide the number of hours a week of care that the mother needs. She won't be placed on a waiting list, of course, because she can get some assistance, but it really just isn't enough.

The daughter tries to arrange for private home care, but although this is a solution for some, it's not a solution when money is a problem. Another problem is the needs of her mother at night, which causes her family to lose

sleep. Her mother was hospitalized again and was discharged to a rehabilitation facility. With the stress level growing and the lack of money a problem, an agonizing decision had to be made. The facility that she was in is also a skilled nursing facility and agreed to admit her and wait for payment until her home was sold.

Now the daughter visits her mother every day after work – and listens as every day her mother asks when she can go home. Every month the family gets the bill for the skilled care facility and realizes that within a few months, the money will be gone and she'll be forced into the Medicaid program. The mother is unhappy, the family is unhappy and feels extremely guilty, and soon Pennsylvania will be paying for another resident of a skilled nursing facility.

We've watched the story of this family unfold over the past few years and have asked ourselves what we could have done to make it better. As with any individual situation, there were decisions made that, looking back, may not have been the best solution. And it was, and it remains for the next few months at least, a private family matter. But it is not an isolated situation –

this experience is replicated every month, every day by family after family in Pennsylvania.

The lesson to be learned from this story, and all the others you've heard about from your constituents or experienced in your family, is that Pennsylvanians and their families who need help want a living situation that is safe and as homelike as possible. All of us realize that some individuals will need the 24 hours a day care that a skilled nursing facility provides. But the longer we can delay that need, through the availability of whatever kind of home and community based service makes the most sense, the happier and more contented individuals and their families will be. And over the long run it will be less expensive for Pennsylvania.

AARP strongly supports the effort to ensure that Pennsylvanians who need long-term care services are able to access them in the method they choose to be the best for them. We feel we have a unique source of funding in Pennsylvania – the lottery – that can help us reach this goal. As you continue to consider the FY 08/09 budget we urge you to look at the urgent needs of the elderly and their families and include funding to address this

problem. We must re-create our state long-term care system so it better reflects the needs and preferences of those who need these services.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today, and we'd be glad to answer any questions you may have.