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**AREA AGENCY ON AGING  
FOR LUZERNE/WYOMING COUNTIES**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Trula Hollywood**

**House Aging and Older Adult Committee**

**Hold Harmless Amendment**

**Testimony April 23, 2013**

***Trula Hollywood, Executive Director***

***Luzerne-Wyoming Area Agency on Aging***

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Good Morning. I would like to thank Chairperson Hennessey and Minority Chairperson Samuelson for organizing this opportunity to provide testimony regarding House Bill 149 amending the "Hold Harmless Act", specifically Section 2210-A, allocation of resources.

My name is Trula Hollywood and I am the Executive Director of the Area Agency on Aging for Luzerne and Wyoming Counties with a total operating budget of \$13,650,969.00.

I am here to attest to the need for the hold harmless lift to be reconsidered. I believe the Commonwealth would be better served to determine the allocation based on the current needs of the elderly in each service area.

The agency's block grant allocation which would be affected by the changes proposed to hold harmless is \$10,558,636.00 which is 17% of our overall budget. The proposed changes to hold harmless would decrease our block grant budget 14.9%.

Luzerne and Wyoming County have a total population of 339,194 with 24% of those persons being over the age of sixty. Twelve percent of the persons over the age of 60 are living in poverty.

I would like to take a moment to provide you with a brief overview of how the older adults in Luzerne

and Wyoming Counties would be affected by the decrease in block grant dollars.

- Three Hundred sixty-eight family caregivers are receiving support to continue to maintain their loved one in the community through the AAA State FCSP. Fifty five of these caregivers would not receive support.
- In Luzerne and Wyoming Counties, meals are served to 197,673 persons a year, 93% of whom are at high risk nutritionally. The decreased allocation would require 27,674 individuals to lose their meals.
- It is significant to note these are the figures for the 11/12 FY. As population and demand rise, more individuals over the age of 60 with medical needs and functional limitations will be in need of service. With the proposed decrease in allocation to these counties, a significant wait list would need to be initiated.
- Health promotion activities for individuals who attend the Senior Centers every day would be decreased. These individuals are in need of daily socialization and activity to delay or prevent disease.
- Protective Service activities to educate and prevent elder abuse would need to be curtailed. Investigators would be required to carry a higher caseload thus decreasing the quality of intervention for those who are abused, neglected, and exploited.

While Luzerne/Wyoming Area Agency on Aging currently has no waiting list, services have been placed on hold until funds are available throughout the fiscal year. A decrease in allocation would most certainly put the agency in a position of creating a wait list.

Cutting services is not an option for those who are currently being provided those services so it stands to reason that a wait list would grow very quickly.

Limiting services for specific service areas in the Commonwealth, especially in rural areas where services are already difficult to access, could be devastating to the elderly population.

In closing, maintaining the current allocation is vital to meet the needs of the citizens of the service area of Luzerne-Wyoming as well as for others.

I would respectfully request the Committee members to consider how difficult it will be for older Pennsylvanians who are unable to access needed services. Would they be forced to into institutionalization? How would their needs for proper nutrition be met? How would their socialization needs be met? Would their health deteriorate quicker due to loss of social contacts? Would elder abuse issues, now in the forefront of the public eye, be missed and go unreported?

The care provided to individuals over the age of 60 through the Area Agency on Aging is vital to maintaining health and wellness. Without this care, the likelihood of increased nursing home placement will increase.

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