

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1143
HEALTH, INSURANCE, AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 26, 2015

MY NAME IS LORIN CHEVALIER, AND I'M REPRESENTING THE HOME CARE ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

MDM. CHAIR, MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, AND REP. CONTI, I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH, INSURANCE, AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE TODAY ON AN IMPORTANT MATTER THAT IMPACTS THE HEALTH, FINANCES, AND DIGNITY OF MANY COLORADO SENIOR CITIZENS EVERY DAY

I OWNED AND RAN THE LICENSED HOME CARE AGENCY, SENIOR HELPERS, FOR 7 YEARS PRIOR TO SELLING IT IN 2014

DURING THAT TIME, SENIOR HELPERS PROVIDED NON-MEDICAL PERSONAL CARE FOR THOUSANDS OF SENIORS ALONG THE COLORADO FRONT RANGE FROM CASTLE ROCK TO THE WYOMING BORDER

PRIOR TO THAT, I SERVED AS CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER AT TWO OF THE LARGEST SPECIALTY HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANIES IN THE NATION

HB 1143 ADDRESSES THE NEEDS OF AN IMPORTANT SEGMENT OF COLORADO'S POPULATION

COLORADANS AGE 75 YEARS AND OLDER TOTALED 240,000 PER THE 2010 CENSUS

MANY IN THIS AGE DEMOGRAPHIC NEED ASSISTANCE WITH TAKING MEDICATIONS, PREPARING/EATING NUTRITIOUS MEALS, BATHING/MANAGING PERSONAL HYGIENE, STANDING/WALKING, AND OTHER NORMAL ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

GENERALLY, THIS KIND OF ASSISTANCE IS NOT COVERED BY MEDICARE ON AN ONGOING BASIS

SO, FOR THE ELDERLY LIVING OUTSIDE OF NURSING HOMES AND ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES — AND WHO ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR MEDICAID — THEY HAVE TO COVER THE COSTS OF ASSISTANCE WITH THESE REQUIREMENTS OF NORMAL INDEPENDENT LIVING ON THEIR OWN

THIS KIND OF ASSISTANCE FOR THE ELDERLY IS AVAILABLE FROM LICENSED HOME CARE AGENCIES, WHICH OFTEN CHARGE BETWEEN \$22-26/HR OR MORE FOR THESE SERVICES ON A "SELF PAY" OUT-OF-POCKET BASIS

AT JUST 2 HOURS/DAY, AT AN AVG RATE OF \$24/HR, THIS CAN COST UPWARDS OF \$17K/YR TO COLORADO SENIORS WHO ARE ALREADY STRUGGLING TO COVER THEIR DAILY LIVING EXPENSES

MOREOVER, THE EMPLOYER MANDATE COMPONENT OF THE FEDERAL HEALTH CARE REFORM LEGISLATION, AND THE INCREASING MINIMUM WAGE, AND PROPOSED CHANGES AT THE US DoL REGARDING OVERTIME PAY FOR HOME CARE AGENCY CAREGIVERS, ALL THREATEN TO DRIVE THE COST OF THIS KIND OF CARE MUCH HIGHER

WITH MOST SENIORS LIVING ON FIXED INCOMES, COVERING THIS KIND OF EXPENSE OUT OF POCKET CAN BE EXTREMELY CHALLENGING, AND FOR SOME, COMPLETELY IMPOSSIBLE

THOSE WHO GO WITHOUT, RUN THE RISK OF UNNECESSARY ACCIDENTS THAT CAN PROVE CATASTROPHIC AND CAN LAND THEM IN THE HOSPITAL OR AN EXTENDED STAY IN A NURSING HOME AT SIGNIFICANT COST TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM

MANY OF THOSE WHO BITE THE BULLET AND HIRE HELP OUT-OF-POCKET CAN QUICKLY EXHAUST THEIR LIMITED FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO THE POINT OF QUALIFYING FOR MEDICAID... AGAIN AT SIGNIFICANT COST TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM

HB 1143 CAN HELP ALLEVIATE THESE RISKS TO SENIORS' HEALTH AND WELLBEING, WHILE REDUCING THE INCIDENCE OF SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER COST DRAINS ON PUBLIC HEALTH DOLLARS

IN ADDITION TO HELPING KEEP SENIORS SAFE AND INDEPENDENT IN THEIR OWN HOMES, HB 1143 CAN HELP SENIORS SUCCESSFULLY RECOVER AT HOME AFTER A HOSPITAL OR REHAB STAY

MANY STUDIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY HAVE SHOWN THAT A RELATIVELY SMALL INVESTMENT IN PATIENT FOLLOW-UP CARE AFTER A MEDICARE BENEFICIARY HAS BEEN DISCHARGED FROM THE HOSPITAL CAN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE THE NUMBER OF UNNECESSARY RE-HOSPITALIZATIONS

THESE SO-CALLED "CARE TRANSITIONS" FROM A HOSPITAL OR REHAB FACILITY BACK TO AN ELDERLY PATIENT'S HOME CAN INCLUDE ENSURING PATIENT SAFETY IN THE SEVERAL WEEKS AFTER DISCHARGE, ENSURING THE PATIENT GETS NUTRITIOUS MEALS TO SUPPORT THEIR RECOVERY, HELPING THEM SCHEDULE A FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT WITH THEIR PRIMARY CARE DOCTOR, ENSURING THEY HAVE TRANSPORTATION TO THAT DOCTOR APPOINTMENT, AND HELPING THEM FOLLOW DISCHARGE ORDERS INCLUDING STAYING ON WHAT MAY BE A NEW MEDICATION REGIMEN

ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH THESE CARE TRANSITIONS BEST PRACTICES OFTEN REQUIRES IN-HOME SERVICES PROVIDED BY LICENSED HOME CARE AGENCIES AT OUT-OF-POCKET COST TO SENIORS

HB 1143 RECOGNIZES THAT MANY OF OUR STATE'S SENIORS ARE CAUGHT BETWEEN THIS ROCK A HARD PLACE AND RECOGNIZES THAT BY PROVIDING A LIMITED TAX CREDIT ON AN INCOME QUALIFIED BASIS TO SENIORS AGE 75 AND OLDER, WE CAN HELP THEM OBTAIN THE CRITICAL HOME CARE SERVICES, DURABLE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT, AND HOME MODIFICATIONS THAT THEY NEED TO REMAIN SAFE AND INDEPENDENT IN THEIR OWN HOMES, INCLUDING SUCCESSFULLY RECOVERING AT HOME AFTER A HOSPITAL OR REHAB STAY, WHILE POTENTIALLY SAVING FAR MORE IN COSTS TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM THAN THE COST OF THIS LEGISLATION

FOR THESE REASONS, I URGE YOU TO RESPECT THE DIGNITY OF COLORADO'S SENIORS BY SUPPORTING HB 1143

THANK YOU