

House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE State Representative Ruth Fahrbach



‘Money Follows the Person’
highlighted
human services legislation in regular
session

Each year, the legislature entertains proposed legislation on a variety of issues. This year, the General Assembly passed several human services bills involving nursing homes, hospice coverage and ‘Money Follows the Person.’

The non-partisan Office of Legislative Research (OLR) has compiled summaries of these major acts passed by the legislature. According to OLR, the Money Follows the Person s act increases the number of individuals who can be served under the state's plan for participating in the federal Money Follows the Person (MFP) program from 700 to 5,000. MFP is a five-year program that permits states to move people out of nursing homes or other institutional settings into less-restrictive, community-based settings.

The law establishes a separate, non-lapsing General Fund account to hold the enhanced federal matching funds the state receives for MFP. It specifies the uses of account funds and requires a report on expenditures from it. This law, SB 561, became effective July 1.

This Hospice Care act requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide Medicaid clients with a full range of hospice services beginning January 1, 2009. Currently, the state provides Medicaid-funded home health care services but not the full array of hospice-type benefits required by state plan services. Under federal Medicaid law, states have the option to cover these services.

The Small Nursing Home Initiative law directs DSS to establish a pilot program, within existing resources, to help develop up to 10 small-house nursing homes in the state. The pilot’s goals are to improve the quality of life for nursing home residents and provide nursing home care in home-like, rather than institutional, settings. DSS must develop design specifications guidelines and other requirements for the homes and submit them to the legislature’s Human Services Committee by October 1, 2008 for approval.

Licensed nursing homes may apply to DSS to participate in the pilot and to relocate existing Medicaid certified beds to a small-house nursing home.

Finally, a Supportive Housing law authorizes the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to provide an additional 500 “Next Steps” supportive housing units for people with mental illness. Funding for these units comes from mortgages, tax credits, and grants from the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) and the Department of Economic and Community Development. The act authorizes the state to provide annual debt service payments on an additional \$35 million in bonds issued by CHFA.

For a hard copy of these new laws, please contact my office at 240-8700.

State Rep. Ruth Fahrback represents the 61st District, including Suffield, and parts of Windsor and East Granby, in the General Assembly.