

# CT House of Representatives Votes to Enhance State's Aging-in-Place Regulations

By [Ken Dixon](#), CT Insider, April 29, 2024

HARTFORD — In an attempt to help elders stay in their homes while saving the state money, the House of Representatives on Monday overwhelmingly approved legislation that requires agencies employing home health aides and home care professionals to provide better training on recognizing and responding to harassment, abuse and discrimination.

The wide-ranging legislation, given a top priority this year by majority Democrats [who labeled it H.B. 5001](#), passed 143-3. If ratified in the Senate and signed into law by the governor, the new law would require all home health care attendants, home health aides, homemaker-companions, and hospice agencies to supply employees with identification badges that include names and photographs to be displayed during each client appointment.

The consumer-oriented centerpiece of the bill for the 800,000 state residents 60 years of age and older, would be an online nursing home consumer dashboard. It would go live on the state Public Health Department's website this summer and provide detailed information on quality of care in the state's nursing home industry, where about 20,000 people reside, and display leading industry practices.

"The urgency is real," said Rep. Jane Garibay, D-Windsor, co-chairwoman of the Committee on Aging, noting that 23 percent of the state population would be affected. She said that the bipartisan bill was drafted with input from state agencies and nursing homes. "This has the potential to reshape public policy on aging for our state."

It also includes a regulatory presumption of Medicaid eligibility and further federal funding for people who remain in their homes but need outside help. "That, in my opinion, is everything that we've been working on for years for aging in place," said Rep. Mitch Bolinsky of Newtown, a ranking Republican on the Committee on Aging.

Garibay said some of the state's remaining pandemic relief funds would be used to start up the program.

"Even in year one we believe there will be savings to this bill," Garibay said, noting that tens of millions of dollars has been saved by other states that have adopted the model. "People will be able to have home care. They will be presumed eligible."

During a pre-session briefing with Capitol reporters, Speaker of the House Matt Ritter, D-Hartford, brought in a bipartisan group of lawmakers who worked on the bill, which would make it mandatory for local agents caring for elders to make their clients aware of services and resources, and help them search for housing opportunities, waiting lists and consumer reports. It would also make it easier for home care workers to get fingerprinted as part of their background checks.

State Rep. Anne Hughes, D-Easton, called the online dashboard an important game changer for older residents and their families, particularly those living out-of-state and trying to manage their relative's care. It would also expand the state [Department of Social Services' Connecticut Homecare Program](#) to provide stipends for Medicaid-eligible people to stay in their homes and avoid much-more expensive nursing homes.

Hughes said the legislation came to fruition from a variety of stakeholders, including older residents who had been victims of harassment and abuse. "We really sought in a bipartisan way to come up with legislation that would protect people living in the community as much as possible; people in nursing homes; families that are out-of-state trying to line up services for their loved ones when they don't really know what they need and they don't know what they're looking at," she said.

The dashboard would be aimed at providing transparency for families to find services and their ratings for quality of care for different facilities. "That's really important for the public to understand and for families, especially from out of state to access that transparency," Hughes said.

The bill includes home care registries to allow consumers to review available services, including language and cultural competencies being offered by agencies. "We want to increase the confidence and protection of both the workforce and the patient or resident needing those services," Hughes said of the uniform background checks and ID badges.