**22nd Annual VOICES Forum**

Welcome to the annual VOICES Forum! I feel very fortunate to be here today as the new State Long Term Care Ombudsman. I am honored to be following in the footsteps of Nancy Shaffer and her commitment to advocacy. I share her passion to champion the voice of individuals and that every VOICE matters.

It is incredibly important that as the world of Long Term Service and Supports advances we are sure that your voice is heard. The voices of residents in Connecticut nursing homes continue to raise issues of importance to legislators, policy makers and care providers. In the past your voice has advanced improvements related to the Personal Needs Allowance, Fear of Retaliation, nursing home staffing levels and Residents’ Rights.

We want to ensure that all nursing home residents have an opportunity to receive unbiased knowledge of what Long Term Services and Supports are available to them and what each setting includes. It is not only important that you have more choices than ever, but that they are quality choices about where they live, what their supports look like and who provides those supports. We want to champion the continued advancements in person-centered care, technology, health care services, and housing options available to you. Connecticut is working hard to ensure that residents continue to have greater access to home and community based living options.

For residents who choose to make the nursing home their long term home, we must continue to ensure good quality care and the protection of residents’ rights. We want Connecticut’s nursing homes to continue to improve and thrive, providing the highest level of care. We can do this by sharing best practices and learning from each other’s experiences. We want to set an expectation of excellence in care and give voice to what is important to you. Please tell us what is going well and where you see the need for improvement.

This legislative session we will continue to advocate for protecting the Personal Needs Allowance, raising the minimum staffing requirements and access to non-medical transportation. The Ombudsman’s office wants to get your feedback on other areas of concern and how best to represent your voice.

I promise to continue the hard work, looking deeper, asking the hard questions and pressing for good outcomes. I am grateful for our many partners throughout Connecticut who share our vision to improve the lives of nursing home residents.

Thank you for your advocacy on behalf of all of Connecticut’s nursing home residents!

Warm regards,

Mairead Painter

State Long Term Care Ombudsman