

House Committee on Aging and Long Term Care
Feb. 17, 2009

HB 2242/Expanding the authority of the Long Term Care Ombudsman
Martin Kennedy, Deputy Secretary

I appear today to testify in support of HS 2242 in its proposed amended form. As many of you know, Secretary Kathy Greenlee served as the State Long Term Care Ombudsman immediately prior to being named to her current position. She believes her advocacy on behalf of nursing home residents helped inform her work as Secretary of Aging.

The Department on Aging strives to develop an array of services to assist seniors as they age. Seniors and their families consistently express a desire to remain living in their own homes and communities as long as possible. For many seniors, however, nursing home placement may be their ultimate choice. We work closely with nursing home providers to support new models of nursing home care. We are deeply committed to culture change in long term care and recognize the many outstanding Kansas providers.

We support the concept of giving the state Long Term Care Ombudsman jurisdiction to serve former nursing home residents, as suggested in the amendment offered by Gilbert Cruz. As we expand community support, more seniors and people with disabilities will be leaving the nursing home and going home. Ombudsmen are familiar with the unique perspective of nursing home residents. We believe this limited expansion of the law would be compatible with the mission of the state long term care ombudsman.

To provide comprehensive services in each community across the state, local organizations must work together. We encourage the state Long Term Care Ombudsman to work closely with the Area Agencies on Aging and the Centers for Independent Living. These two groups of organizations have a wealth of knowledge about the types of services available to assist a resident who leaves the nursing home with the hope of continuing to remain at home.