

TESTIMONY OF

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REGARDING

HOUSE BILL 1743

BEFORE THE  
AGING AND OLDER ADULT SERVICES  
COMMITTEE

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

MAY 28, 2008

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee today to discuss House Bill 1743. My name is Ray Landis and I am the Advocacy Manager for AARP Pennsylvania.

AARP's National Policy Book states "Volunteering offers older people the opportunity to serve as resources to one another, to their communities, and to the nation." Volunteerism comes in many different forms and means different things to different people. Our experience at AARP shows us that older Pennsylvanians who have a desire to volunteer approach volunteerism in many different ways.

Some potential volunteers are looking to try something completely different than what they experienced during their working years. Others simply want to help in their communities and aren't as concerned about what they're doing so long as it's making a difference. But others want to use the skills they developed during their careers in a way that can help others. A mentoring situation is an ideal outlet for this type of volunteer work.

AARP believes that mentoring programs have the potential to be of great benefit both to those who are learning skills and those who serve in the

capacity of teacher and/or coach. The establishment of a retiree mentoring program as is described in House Bill 1743 would provide opportunities for individuals who desire to use their experience in work environments to convey their knowledge and advice to those who may need this type of guidance in order to hold down a job.

As AARP has worked with volunteers across Pennsylvania and across the nation, we have realized that every individual volunteer is different. Some desire a great deal of flexibility in their volunteer work, while some demand a defined structure. We have found that our greatest success comes when we are able to create volunteer opportunities that can accommodate both these desires. We believe that a mentoring program has the potential to work with all types of volunteers. We would urge that should such a program be established that the guidelines allow the program to take advantage of the best traits of volunteers, permitting them to function in the environment that works best for them.

We would like to add one cautionary note to the discussion of this program. AARP believes that volunteer programs are best used as complements to trained professionals instead of substitutes for the services these

professionals provide. Individuals moving from welfare to work often need assistance with issues such as child care. An important part of the training of the volunteer mentors must be to ensure the mentors know sources where they can refer individuals when there is a question or concern the mentor cannot address.

AARP feels the retiree welfare-to-work mentoring program can be a great benefit to those receiving as well as providing mentoring services. We support the passage of House Bill 1743 and look forward to offering any assistance our organization can provide in the implementation of this program.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today, and I would be glad to respond to any questions you may have.