



Advocating for Older Adults of Today and Tomorrow

Testimony of

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On

*House Bill 5127: An Act Concerning the Admission of
Elderly Persons to Public and Subsidized Housing*

Select Committee on Aging

February 19, 2008

Good morning and thank you for this opportunity to provide support to House Bill 5127, *An Act Concerning the Admission of Elderly Persons to Public and Subsidized Housing*. This bill strives to ease the transition for individuals who are accepted into subsidized housing, by allowing them to terminate their existing leases without penalty.

As you know, the Commission on Aging is the independent state agency solely devoted to enhancing the lives of the present and future generations of our state's older adults. I'd like to start by thanking this committee for its leadership in advocating for initiatives that enhance the quality of life for older adults and their families. I'd also like to thank the committee for its co-sponsorship of the recent Legislative Briefing presenting the results of the state's first Long-Term Care Needs Assessment in over 20 years.

As part of the Long-Term Care Needs Assessment, over 7,000 residents, providers and experts were asked to identify gaps in long-term care services in Connecticut. Providers and residents alike noted the lack of safe, affordable housing in Connecticut, particularly for those with disabilities. This lack of housing was ranked as the second largest barrier to people living high quality lives in their communities (behind transportation). It was also ranked as a significant barrier to transitioning people back into their communities from nursing homes, a goal Connecticut strives toward in its Money Follows the Person program and other rebalancing efforts.

In short, people are unable to receive the home- and community-based care that is more appropriate, affordable and preferred if they do not have a home in which to receive it.

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Recognizing the high costs of housing, Connecticut has made some strides in the provision of subsidized elderly housing, including congregate housing. However, the need for housing for low-moderate income older adults and individuals with disabilities is far greater than the supply. Many individuals spend months and even years on waiting lists for affordable, appropriate places to live. Unfortunately, when they are accepted, they are often presented with an immediate problem: if they are in the middle of a lease in their current home or apartment, they must make the painful choice to give up their spot in the housing they have been awaiting, pay out the remaining months of their lease in one lump sum, or risk being sued by their landlords.

This bill would literally “open doors” for older adults and people with disabilities by eliminating the need for that choice. It allows individuals who are accepted into state- or federal-subsidized elderly housing to provide their landlords with thirty days’ written notice and be released from further obligations.

This commonsense initiative has already been adopted by our neighboring state of New York. I believe that it balances the needs of older adults and individuals with disabilities in Connecticut with the rights of landlords to have notice of a vacancy in their property. It complements existing efforts in our state to provide more care in less restrictive, more preferred settings, and to help people remain vibrant participants in their communities.

I urge your support.

Thank you.