



*Collaborative Center
for Justice, Inc.*

40 Clifford Street
Hartford, CT 06114-1717

Phone: 860-692-3066
Fax: 860-692-3068
E-mail: advocacy@ccfj.org
Web site: www.ccfj.org

**Testimony before the Connecticut General Assembly Judiciary Committee
March 3, 2006**

**In Opposition to S.B. 361 – An Act Concerning Possessions and Personal Effects of
Tenants Evicted from Residential Property.**

My name is Sister Linda Pepe, CSJ. I am Associate Director of the Collaborative Center for Justice in Hartford. We are sponsored by six religious Congregations of women and our Center has a membership of approximately 800 Women Religious and their Associates.

I write today in opposition to S.B. 361- “An Act Concerning Possession and Personal Effects of Tenants Evicted from Residential Property.” There are numerous reasons for opposing this bill, but I will try to list the most important:

- First, this is a mean-spirited bill. It fails to take into account the fact that once a person, or a family, have lost their dwelling through a court ordered eviction, all they have left is what is contained inside the apartment, and to take those possessions away is simply adding insult to an already devastating situation. I seriously doubt that the landlord wants, or could use, the possessions “locked” in the apartment, and therefore, what the bill actually does is give the landlord the legal means to vent his or her anger which certainly arises from the eviction process.
- Second, this Bill – S.B. 361, is not equitable since all reasons for evictions are not lack of rent. It is possible that a renter has possessions that are of considerable value. Since not all eviction involves money, we should not allow the landlord to “profit” through evictions. Even if the renter’s contents are not of great monetary value, they may be irreplaceable in regards to sentimental value, and what right does the landlord have to destroy, or better still, make a decision regarding these possessions?
- Third, S.B. 361 deals with the very end of the process. Many evictions are the results of job loss, medical problems, disability and a host of other facts that the tenant has no control over. Why are we not addressing the jobless situation in Connecticut, or the increase in homelessness? Is there anyone on this Committee that finds homelessness appealing, or thinks one is not devastated by the reality of being homeless? Why not give this person or family at least their possessions to take to a homeless shelter?! Have we lost all sense of compassion?
- Fourth, a further indication that this bill is mean-spirited is the motivation behind the bill. Just because the landlord does not want the expense of paying a State Marshal to remove the possessions from the apartment, is hardly a valid reason for proposing legislation that would simply lock the possessions within the apartment. Equally as men, is the city or town motivation for supporting S.B. 361, i.e. the cost of storing or removing these possessions. Towns and cities, under the present law, have to assume

the expense of removal from the street and/or storing the contents of the apartment for the 15 days before the possessions can be sold at auction, if not claimed by the tenant. Is 15 days an unreasonable time period to wait when a person, or family, who now are homeless?

- Finally, S.B. 361 may save on expenses for the landlord and city or town, but it certainly does not save the State any money. Families with children must seek State Assistance to clothe and provide adequate housing for children. How much sense does it make to lock clothes, beds, bedding and furniture in an apartment, when the State now had to furnish these items?

I ask you to consider the importance of a place called “home,” and the need, dare I say right, of every person to feel secure in that place, and then, I ask you to consider the intent and consequences of S.B. 361 in the light of what it means to have a “home.” Please oppose S.B. 361.