

**Testimony
Jean Myers
Community Development Services, Inc.
Before the
Judiciary Committee
Legislative Office Building
March 17, 2006**

**RE: SB-666, An Act Concerning Municipal Liens for Accrued
Fines and Certain Code Violations**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB-666, which will provide towns and municipalities with a powerful mechanism for addressing blighted properties.

As an organization that promotes affordable housing opportunities for the state's low and moderate income residents, we are concerned about rental housing that is allowed to fall into severe disrepair and dilapidation. These blighted properties send a negative signal to towns and citizens about affordable housing and whether such housing should be supported or encouraged in their community. It is difficult enough to win support for affordable housing projects in some communities without these concerns.

We already face reluctance from towns and residents when we try to build affordable housing units in their communities. These concerns are exacerbated when other affordable housing units are allowed to persist in deteriorated and unlivable conditions. Our tenants deserve much better. Unfortunately, there is little recourse for towns to address these blighted properties and so these conditions are allowed to persist, to the detriment of low and moderate income tenants who have little or no options. The reality is that if these tenants complain to authorities, they may find themselves out on the street.

Connecticut needs to address these concerns by enhancing municipal enforcement of local zoning and health requirements to protect the health and safety of our tenants. While increased fines are important, allowing the city to place a priority lien on the property is even more important to addressing this issue.

Allowing the town to place a lien on the property will significantly enhance the town's ability to ensure prompt and continued compliance with the laws. It will serve as a wake-up call for property owners that they need to maintain their properties and provide tenants with housing that meets the public health and safety laws and regulations of this state.

We therefore urge you to support SB-666.