



State of Connecticut

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF

HB# 6276- An Act Concerning A Skills Empowerment Corps,

Human Services Committee, Tuesday, February 13, 2007

LOB-Room 2A- 9:15am

Good morning, Rep. Villano, Senator Harris and the members of the Human Services Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to share an important idea with you that can really make a difference in the lives of some of our state's most needy citizens.

I ask for your support of PHB# 6276, AAC A Skills Empowerment Corps. The goal of this bill is to create a pilot program in the Middlesex County area to prevent homelessness and to assist homeless single adults in getting back on their feet, and hopefully, to find a way out of poverty.

PHB# 6276 would offer an organized approach to ending homelessness. Acknowledging that homeless shelters are full and that employment and training programs are scarce and hard to access, the goal of PHB# 6276 is to develop one house for up to eight single homeless men. The program would be comprehensive and last for 2 years of 4 six month semesters each. The most important aspects of this pilot program are emotional support and job training leading to employment.

One of my constituents, Spencer Killian, first approached me with this excellent idea because he believes that our homeless population is growing faster than we can provide homes and services to assist. Mr. Killian's idea is to fashion a model

reminiscent of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps. Government and non-profits must join together to provide work, education and shelter, town by town. Middletown housing advocates know who needs help, what has been needed is the coordination and commitment of government to be part of the solution, instead of just providing ever decreasing amounts of money. Think about this program as a hand-up to our lost general assistance population.

The applicants must be drug-free and committed to work and to improving their education skills. The residents would be paid for the community work they do. Private employers would be enlisted to offer assistance and opportunities. We have the social service network in Middletown to try this innovative approach. It is an exciting and challenging effort—let us try to find homes and jobs for people—one person at a time.

Thank you for your time. I ask for your favorable consideration by sending this bill on to the Appropriations Committee.