



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MINORITY WHIP

FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE NOMINATIONS
COMMITTEE

March 3, 2008

Dear Senator Coleman, Representative Feltman, Senator Harris, Representative Hennessy, Senator Fasano, Representative Bacchiochi and Members of the Planning and Development Committee:

I would like to submit this testimony to the Planning and Development Committee in opposition to raised H.B. 5637, ***AN ACT CONCERNING LOCAL REVIEW OF COMMUNITY RESIDENCES AND HALFWAY HOUSES IN MULTIFAMILY BUILDINGS.***

First, I'd like to say that I am, generally speaking, in support of the intent of halfway houses and other transitional facilities often utilized by the Department of Corrections, group homes and the like that are similarly used by DCF, DMR, etc.

However, one particularly troubling part of the equation is the often stealth placement of some of these group home facilities in our communities. Circumventing local planning and zoning regulations, without community notification, does not foster support for a proposed group home or halfway house in a community. In fact, it does the opposite in many instances, and can often serve to create and embolden opponents of these homes.

Residents in many communities would be much more open to the types of facilities referenced in H.B. 5637 if they felt like they had some say or role in the siting process. That is why I have submitted legislation in the past calling for mandatory public hearings before these types of homes are thrust upon our communities.

I am currently working with my constituents in Harwinton, after a DCF group home was thrust upon them in a seemingly secretive, clandestine manner. I can attest, after talking with members of the affected neighborhood that many are supportive of the intentions of the DCF group home, but people are equally upset at how local zoning laws were circumvented without even the benefit of a public hearing.

I believe the stated purpose of H.B. 5637 - to require multi-family buildings with community residences, child care facilities and halfway houses be treated similarly to other multi-family buildings for zoning and neighborhood revitalization purposes – is misguided. If passed into law, this would be a step back, in my view.

Finding locations for group homes and halfway houses is challenging enough without circumventing local rule. It is my belief that a little more sunshine in this process would be beneficial to all those involved. For that purpose, I urge the committee to reject H.B. 5637.

Sincerely,

John E. Piscopo
State Representative