

Testimony of Carol Walter, Executive Director CT Coalition to End Homelessness to the Appropriations Committee, February 18, 2009

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and Members of the Appropriations Committee, and thank you for hearing my testimony today. I speak on behalf of my boss, thousands of men woman and children who slept in shelters, cars, abandoned buildings, basements and under bridges last night, and the hundreds of dedicated non-profit and public sector employees who work hard every day to ensure their survival. For them, and on behalf of the Coalition I first Offer my thanks to the Governor's commitment to assuring the continuation of these vital emergency services . We also appreciate her support of CCEH's proposed prevention and rapid re-housing pilot program in CT. And it couldn't be more timely as we prepare for the infusion if significant federal stimulus dollars which will allow us to exand this effort over the next two years.

However, all of these promising practices will build a 'bridge to nowhere' unless we maintain our investment in those things that go to the very root of homelessness: affordable and supportive housing.

For example: the elimination of funding for the third round of Next Steps reduces our ability to provide critical supportive housing to individuals such as those who have occupied a tent city under bridges in Waterbury, Hartford, New London and other communities around the state. The lack of funding for PILOTS (payment in lieu of taxes) assures that hundreds of housing authority units which can be available for low income working families who are assisted through our prevention and rapid re-housing programs will be as unaffordable as the private market rentals which are so limited around our state. The critical services provided to

homeless and at risk families who have been served so successfully through the DCF Supportive Housing for Families program will no longer be available, driving up demand in our shelter system. And any production of affordable housing in our state, so badly needed in all of our communities, will be held to a standstill---no development, no capacity, no pipeline.

The economic difficulty facing our state and our nation is unprecedented. No-one feels it more directly than the individuals, including thousands of young children, who are homeless each day. We ask that you continue CT's commitment, and progress, toward eradicating the root causes of this grave social injustice.

Thank You

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