

COUNCIL OF NEIGHBORHOODS

inc

MERIDEN, CT.

A 501C3 IRS Non-Profit Organization

WWW.meridencona.org

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To:
Human Services Committee Public Hearing
Ct. State Legislature

Ref: HB 5243 Sober Houses

To Members of the Human Services Committee, Thank you for this opportunity to address this Major Issue of Sober Houses in the City of Meriden. My name is Dave Swedock, President of the Council of Neighborhoods, inc of Meriden. This is the umbrella organization for 32 Neighborhood Associations and Block Watches within the city of Meriden. Our main mission is attain and maintain safe neighborhoods throughout our city by partnerships with the Meriden Police Dept and the City of Meriden.

Meriden was once proudly known as the "Silver City", and recently we had been referred to the "Sober House" city. The widespread proliferation of Sober Houses as a profitable means of turning apartment buildings into "Human Warehouses" has subsided within the past few years, due mainly to the to the State Budget Crisis. Unscrupulous landlords were receiving \$500 per person per month to supposedly house these recovering addicts and provide a stable and structured environment to live. Many of these so-called Sober Houses literally packed people in to every crevice and living space possible for maximum profit. When City Officials went to investigate and attempted to correct the situations, the landlords hid behind various State and federal laws such as the Federal Disabilities Act and claimed immunity.

I regret to inform you that I cannot support this ambiguous piece of legislation because it has no relevance whatsoever to correcting this problem. If you the Legislators, reject his piece of legislation then you are in fact admitting that no manager is required and every sober house will now be free to get rid of any that they currently have.

If you the Legislators agree to this ambiguous statement, then nothing changes. Because now the sober house owners who often hire or give free rent to a recovering addict and make them the house monitor, will just continue to do so. You are just validating the current inept system that promotes human warehousing without providing services.

I have asked for legislation that requires Sober House Operators to provide a Qualified Degreed individual to manage and provide the proper services for their clients. This would take the stigma of sober houses as being a for profit human warehouse into a proper care and recovery service. Being close to the Meriden Police Dept. and listening to complaints at Neighborhood Association meetings, I can tell you that Sober Houses are not run as you think they are, the system is broke, it needs fixing.

Please provide some legislation that requires a proper degreed manager and adherence to local zoning, Code and Health requirements, such as handicapped access, handicapped toilet facilities and the like.

Please don't feel that we are against helping people in need, we just ask that it is done properly , for the right reasons and the rules are followed and not hiding behind any federal laws just to make a buck at these peoples expense.

Thank You

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David T. Swedock". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "D" and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

David T. Swedock