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TO: Planning and Development Committee, CT Legislature  
FROM: Rhoda Micocci, Esq.  
RE: H.B. 5031 Sections 3 & 4, H.B. 5255 Sections 2 & 3; Protection of Tenant Possessions Post-Eviction  
DATE: March 10, 2010

Thank you for considering my testimony today.

I ask that you vote to delete Sections 3 and 4 from H.B. 5031 and Sections 2 and 3 from H.B. 5255. Specifically, I ask you to vote to maintain the law as it stands regarding municipal involvement and protection of tenant possessions post-eviction.

In the course of my work at the legal aid hotline in Connecticut, I have counseled several thousand tenants about to be evicted, and more recently many homeowners about to be evicted due to foreclosure. One by one, I have explained the landlord's or bank's right to possession of the property, that the tenant or former homeowner must leave taking all their possessions.

Some cannot cope: the dying man with nowhere to go whose landlord said "I don't want you dying on my property;" the many children (some very sick themselves) whose parents are ill or unemployed; the elderly too frail to even put their clothes in a garbage bag; the man whose parents built their home many years ago who said he simply could not leave.

Only one of the things I say calms and gives hope in these heart-rending cases: "the town will take your things and store them for 15 days, during which you can get them back; otherwise they are auctioned off."

This wise law for disposition of tenant property in the 10% to 15% of cases where the tenant does not remove it, has worked successfully for years. It has allowed fragile, confused, burdened and disabled people time to find help to retrieve their things. Or, crucially, if they must lose their belongings, they lose them to the "government", to the neutral, impartial, caring, responsible body that they themselves may have voted for. This the dispossessed can accept.

So the law as it stands is not merely a fair and respectful way to, let's face facts, strip evicted tenants and homeowners of the shreds of their identity—their shoes, clothes, spoons, dolls, toy trucks, cribs, beds, chairs, photos of Grandpa and Aunt Ellen, their IRS returns, birth certificates, letters, their doctor's discharge orders-- it also is an excellent public safety measure.

Public safety lies in the hearts and minds of the public first, foremost and always. At a time of public crisis, with 9% counted unemployed in our state, 16% unemployment overall, and up to 25% unemployment among some demographic groups, we need this law as it stands now more than ever to prevent altercations, redeployment of police, needless court cases, criminalization of the vulnerable, and additional tensions that could fray our social fabric.

Please vote to preserve the law as it stands!