



State of Connecticut
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TESTIMONY-CONCERNING H.B. 5255
An Act Concerning Municipal Mandate Relief
Planning and Development Committee Public Hearing
March 10, 2010

I would like to thank the chairs of this committee, Representative Sharkey and Senator Coleman, as well as all the committee members, for the opportunity to address you on HB 5255 An Act Concerning Municipal Mandate Relief. I am here to speak in favor of the bill, but would like to specifically focus on the current proposal to amend the statute that requires municipalities to remove and pay for the storage of property left by an evicted tenant.

I am currently serving as the Vice Chair of the State Grants and Mandate Relief Committee, a subcommittee of the MORE Blue Ribbon Commission. Our committee spent weeks discussing, researching, and receiving input from city and town officials on their ideas for relieving municipalities of state mandates.

During the subcommittee meetings, this particular mandate generated more discussion than almost any other mandate that we reviewed. The majority of representatives from both the cities and towns, agreed, that in light of the current economic crisis, it was time to amend this statute and relieve municipalities of this unnecessary and costly mandate.

Connecticut is one, of only a small handful of states, which places the responsibility on the municipality to remove and store the property of an evicted tenant. This obligation comes at a great expense to the municipality, especially when one considers that an eviction involves a private legal issue between the landlord and the tenant. Furthermore, the research that I have done reflects that the majority of states designate the responsibility of removing and storing an evicted tenant's property to the landlord.

Passing this legislation would not only be consistent with the recommendations of the MORE Commission but is critically important at a time when cities are faced with ever-growing financial difficulties in this current fiscal crisis.

The amendment of this statute would be of great importance to Bridgeport, the city I represent, which recently faced a 20 million dollar budget deficit this past 2009 year. As a result of this substantial deficit, Mayor Finch was forced to make drastic cuts and layoffs, involving over 200 employees, including police officers. Amending this one statute alone would translate into almost \$200,000 in mandate relief for Bridgeport, which handled 572 evictions last year.

Connecticut should take its lead from the majority of other states that do not involve cities and towns in these eviction issues.

During this economic crisis, it is critical that we as legislators restructure government, by finding innovative ways to provide important mandate relief to our municipalities. It is for these reasons that I urge you to support the passage of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Auden Grogins
State Representative
129th Assembly District
Bridgeport