



*A nonpartisan office of the Connecticut General Assembly*

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Testimony of

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Connecticut Commission on Aging

On

DECD 2010-2011 Action Plan for Housing and Community Development

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the draft 2010-2011 Action Plan for Housing and Community Development.

The Connecticut Commission on Aging is a nonpartisan state agency that is part of the legislative branch of government. We are devoted to preparing our state for a burgeoning aging population while promoting policies that enhance the lives of the present and future generations of older adults. For over sixteen years, the Commission has served as an effective leader in statewide efforts to promote choice, independence and dignity for Connecticut's older adults and persons with disabilities. As part of our statutory mandate set forth in CGS §17b-420, the Connecticut Commission on Aging maintains a liaison between the elderly population of the state and government agencies and issues recommendations to foster progress in the lives of older adults across the state.

The Commission has heard from many across the state who have concerns with the 2010-2011 Action Plan. Specifically, the Commission and many senior centers are concerned about proposed criteria for funding senior center projects through the Small Cities/Community Development Block Grant (SC/CDBG). The draft proposal includes two criteria of concern: that senior centers must guarantee a 50% municipal match, and that projects must be "bid ready," including architectural details. Both of these criteria are new for the 2010-2011 year.

Given the current economic climate, increasing demands on municipalities and our aging demographic, these new criteria will place an undue burden on senior centers as they try to attain funding through this federal grant opportunity. Cities and towns are understandably reluctant to dedicate local funding to projects that are not guaranteed to receive needed additional financial support. Although municipalities might be agreeable to dedicating funding contingent on receiving SC/CDBG grant money, it is less likely that they will agree to pay for architectural renderings of proposed projects without funding in place.

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The Commission questions why these requirements would be applied solely to the funding of senior center projects – setting these projects apart from other categories of CDBG funds. Why are senior center projects not treated the same as those that serve the general population?

Although some other states have adopted similar requirements for senior center funding, Connecticut does not have to follow suit. Unless these criteria are removed, it seems unlikely that many – if any – senior center projects will be funded in this grant year. This may lead to leftover, unused federal funds, counter to our shared goal of federal funds maximization.

Finally, the Commission continues to have concern over the requirement that individuals served in CDBG-funded senior centers must be over the age of 60. This age requirement is arbitrary; moreover, it does not allow for the full use of the building during hours when the senior center is closed.

We ask that you reconsider these criteria. We would be most pleased to work with you moving forward on this issue.

Thank you.