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TO: COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS

FROM: Richard W. Venne *R.W.V.*
President/CEO
Community Enterprises, Inc.

RE: Testimony for the Record *Senate Bill No. 422 "AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES PILOT PROGRAM"*

DATE: March 17, 2010

My name is Richard Venne and I am the President/CEO with Community Enterprises, Inc. I am *testifying for the record* on Raised Bill No. 422.

We support Raised Bill 422 because it is vital to keep on supporting employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. According to the US Department of Labor, in February 2010 the percentage of people with disabilities in the labor force was 21.9. By comparison, the percentage of persons with no disability in the labor force is 70.1. It is very clear that as state and a nation we should be committing ourselves to adding employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities not taking them away. Bill 422 is critical to keeping Connecticut's commitment to helping individuals with disabilities obtain meaningful employment. It is imperative that we support this bill that was passed unanimously by the legislature in 2006 as Public Act 06-126. This legislation created the Pilot Program. Extending the program and the pilot now will protect the jobs of people with disabilities during the current difficult economic times.

Community Enterprises, Inc started in the basement of Northampton State Hospital over 30 years ago, the organization has continued to grow and thrive as a vibrant non-profit offering community-based employment,

housing and education services to individuals with disabilities through a regional network of 18 offices. Service funding comes from over 100 different state contracts and serves over 1500 individuals annually. Additional resources are generated through fund-raising and business activities. Most of these services are licensed by the state and the agency is accredited in Community Employment Services, Job Development, Job-Site Training, Job Supports, Community Services and Community Living Services by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

Community Enterprises, Inc. is a participant in the State Preferred Purchasing Program through the Connecticut Community Providers Association. Last year this program created 119 of valuable community jobs, \$321,674 in wages and 23,502 hours of work for people with disabilities. There is nothing more valuable than providing employment opportunities which allow people with disabilities to become fully participating members of our great state. Further, in these tight financial times it is only prudent to support programs which have demonstrated success in reducing or eliminating dependency on federal and state entitlements such as, Social Security Disability, DSS medical benefits, Food Stamps, DMHAS & DDS rent subsidies, and day care subsidies. Supporting Bill 422 not only makes sense but will help Connecticut send a strong message to our nation that people with disabilities want and can successfully work in all types of positions.



Human Service at its Best