

CONNECTICUT LEGAL RIGHTS PROJECT

P.O. Box 351, Silver Street, Middletown, CT 06457
Telephone (860) 262-5030 · Fax (860) 262-5035

**Testimony of Susan Aranoff, J.D. Staff Attorney
Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc.
Before the Human Services Committee
March 2, 2010**

Good afternoon distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Susan Aranoff and I am a Staff Attorney at Connecticut Legal Rights Project. I am here today to speak in support of **Raised Bill 5232 An Act Concerning Transfer or Discharge of Residential Care Home Patients.**

Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc. is a non-profit legal services agency that provides individual and systemic legal services to indigent adults who have, or are perceived as having, psychiatric disabilities and who receive, or are eligible to receive, services from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Connecticut Legal Rights Project maintains offices at all DMHAS operated in-patient and out-patient facilities in the state. Our offices are staffed by attorneys and paralegal advocates. I provide legal services to individual clients and have supervised paralegals who serve residents of Residential Care Homes. My testimony today is informed by my expertise in the area of patients' rights, in general, and my direct experiences in Connecticut.

Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc. supports Raised Bill 5232 as it provides for non-attorney representation of Residential Care Home patients at hearings to appeal a

transfer or discharge. The involuntary discharge of a resident from a residential care home is the functional equivalent of an eviction. However residential care home residents are not afforded the safeguards provided tenants under Connecticut's summary process.

Residents of residential care homes stand a large chance of becoming homeless as a result of an involuntary discharge yet they generally lack the financial resources to engage the services of an attorney to represent them at a hearing. Affording residential care home residents the ability to be represented at a hearing by a non-attorney advocate such as a paralegal from Connecticut legal Rights Project may be the difference between the person becoming homeless or successfully resolving their conflict. Further, in the event the conflict is not resolved, the involvement of an advocate is likely to result in a smooth transition to another residence as opposed to a transition to a shelter.

Accordingly, residents of Connecticut's residential care homes should be able to be represented by an advocate of their choosing, including an employee of the Office of Protection and Advocacy, or a paralegal advocate from the Connecticut Legal Rights Project. I wish to note for the record that all of Connecticut's paralegal advocates work under the direct supervision of attorneys.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions the Committee might have or provide you with any additional information.