

**Testimony of Scott C. Bertrand on Senate Bill 139**

**Aging Committee Public Hearing: February 24, 2011**

**The Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials (CONN-NAHRO)**

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Aging Committee:

My name is Scott Bertrand. I am the recent past president of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials more commonly known as CONN-NAHRO. I am also the Executive Director of the Enfield Housing Authority.

I am here to oppose Senate Bill 139, AN ACT CONCERNING PERSONS RESIDING IN ELDERLY HOUSING AND MEMBERS OF SENIOR CENTERS. While this Bill appears to be well intended, it will have serious detrimental impact on all Housing Authorities who manage Elderly and/or Congregate Housing.

First, the bill would require the Housing Authority to remove snow from tenant's vehicles. Authorities would be forced maintain a tenant's personal private property. The practice for 50 years is that Authority maintains the real estate and the resident takes care of their personal property, including their vehicles.

Maintaining resident's personal property will expose the Authority to liability and damage claims. For example, one who is involved in an accident could claim that the cause was improper snow removal. Others might also seek compensation for damage to vehicles they believe was caused while the snow and ice was removed. The insurance provider who covers the majority of senior housing in Connecticut is very concerned about possible liability claims. They have told me that they will likely need to significantly increase rates if this becomes law. The cost will ultimately be passed on to all residents.

Providing this mandated service will also cost an inordinate amount of time and money. It is likely that the snow removal costs would double. I estimate that the Enfield Housing Authority would need to raise base rents \$30 to \$40 per month to provide this extra service. The cost will be to all residents including those who do not own cars. I am not aware of anywhere else in the country where housing authorities are required by law to maintain the tenant's vehicles.

Also of serious concern is that the proposed senior citizens Bill of Rights is unnecessary. If enacted, it will seriously complicate the existing tenant landlord law and elderly housing statutory requirements that are adequate to protect the rights of seniors. In addition, existing tenant leases, rules and regulations already provide protection of the rights of residents. Therefore, the proposed Bill of Rights is unnecessary.

It should be noted that the proposed The Bill of Rights appears to be modeled on the one used in assisted living and nursing homes. The key difference here is that the assisted living and nursing home population relies on the housing provider for basic daily living needs, this is not the relationship in elderly housing.

The state financed housing units receive no operating subsidy and the federal developments are facing deep cuts. During these times we need to work towards reducing and/or eliminating unfunded mandates and unneeded administrative burdens.

For the reasons stated, I encourage the committee members to vote against Senate Bill 139.

Respectfully Submitted,

Scott C. Bertrand