



CONNECTICUT ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
Promoting Environmental Health in Connecticut Since 1954

February 28, 2011

Raised Bill 957: An Act Concerning Neighborhood Protection

Honorable Members of the Banks Committee:

The Connecticut Environmental Health Association (CEHA) is a membership organization composed of a variety of environmental and public health professionals, but primarily consisting of local health department sanitarians.

CEHA supports Raised Bill 957.

Local health department sanitarians and health inspectors are often the primary code enforcement officials in matters dealing with defective, unhealthy, and unsafe residences. This difficult work becomes even more cumbersome when the ownership responsibilities for such properties are unclear, as often is the case when a property is under foreclosure. Urban communities with older housing stock, in particular, have been hard pressed when trying to respond to emergency public health and safety concerns at properties where an owner cannot be found. This is particularly pointed in regards to bank owned properties. Many of these cases have proven to be very difficult to respond to because of the considerable amount of time spent identifying a party responsible for property maintenance. This amount of time can make the difference between making repairs to a problem within a reasonable amount of time and having to uproot and relocate families until the emergency can be rectified.

The man hours spent in attempting to contact a custodian of a bank owned property ranges from hours to days. Banking institutions have made accessibility very difficult. A call made to a corporate headquarters is often bounced to several locations throughout the country before being received by a party with the ability to simply take emergency orders into advisement.

As an example, in 2010 one Connecticut municipality identified 171 properties in foreclosure; of that, only 54 were registered with the City Clerk's office designating a local custodian of the property. Several of the unregistered properties saw emergencies to public health and safety. In one instance, a three unit building went without water service due to burst pipes. The bank that had foreclosed on the property in July of 2010 was adamant that they did not own the property even though the filing of the foreclosure was registered with the clerk's office identifying them as having taken possession. The occupants of that property, which included school aged children, were forced to relocate. This

particular case, after weeks of wrangling with the bank, is only now seeing resolution.

The protocols which this bill would establish will make compliance efforts proceed more rapidly, and quite possibly, serve to mitigate conditions that may become increasingly dangerous over time. Code enforcement officials will have the tools to more quickly respond to emergencies to protect public health and safety. Municipalities will see neighborhoods maintained and cared for rather than neglected.

For these reasons, we support the passage of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our opinion.

David W. Boone, MPH, RS
CEHA Legislative Chairman
860-652-7534
david.boone@glastonbury-ct.gov