

March 7, 2011

Good Morning Chairs and Members of the Finance Committee. My name is James H French and I live in Hartford Connecticut. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 1008, the bonding bill that provides money for affordable and supportive housing.

I have been homeless for over 15 years. I am a member of the Chrysalis FUSE program, where I am about to be housed. Being housed will give me the opportunity to change my life.

Being homeless makes it very difficult to change your life, in part because you are surrounded by people who don't want to change their lives. It is hard to stay motivated to change when you have to move every 14 to 90 days. You do not have a stable address; you are required to leave the shelter every morning at 7:30 and are not allowed to return until late afternoon. When you don't "belong" anywhere it is difficult to stay focused on the positives.

Privacy is a luxury I do not have. During the day I go to the library, soup kitchen, or walk around. In the evening I am in an oversized room with 90 – 100 other men. I share bathroom facilities with 90 – 100 men. In order for me to have clean clothes I have to put my name on a list. Once my name is on the list, it could take one to two weeks before I have the opportunity to use the washing machines to clean my clothes.

When I am housed I will be able to focus on the positive things in life. It will be easier for me to find stable employment. I will be able to shower and put on clean clothes every day. I will be able to take food from my refrigerator, I will know where I will sleep at the end of the day, and I can start to feel normal again.

Homelessness took away my self esteem, took away my privacy, and took away my hope. With the FUSE program (Frequent Users of Service Enhancements) I will have the chance to live again.

Best Regards,

James French

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