

**Testimony before the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
In Favor of SB 1008
March 7, 2011**

Good afternoon Senator Daily, and Representative Widlitz, and esteemed members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. My name is Thomas Burr, and I am here to testify on behalf of the CT Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, located here in Hartford. NAMI-CT is the largest member organization in the state comprised of people with psychiatric disabilities, and their families.

I am here today to testify in support of SB 1008, AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND OTHER PURPOSES.

This bill includes the bonding funds for permanent supportive housing, to create **150 new supportive units**, as well as the bonding for critically needed affordable housing. The lack of supportive housing remains a key factor in the inappropriate placement of people with mental illnesses into nursing homes and the prison system, as well as in preventing the timely discharge of patients from hospitals and other costly inpatient settings.

People who are chronically homeless who have not been housed and left behind tend to be medically vulnerable, have high rates of co-occurring substance use and mental illness and are the highest cost users of public services.

Recently, California teamed with the Corporation for Supportive Housing on a Pilot Project for frequent (homeless) users of health services. This initiative's ability to connect clients to support services and care in lower-cost community-based settings resulted in significant hospital utilization reductions. The pilot program led to a 61 percent decrease in emergency department visits and a 62 percent decrease in inpatient days over two years of client participation. You may be aware that CSH has launched a similar Pilot here in CT, and we expect similar results.

As a parent of a now adult child who has experienced a severe mental illness, I have seen firsthand how having inadequate access to independent and affordable housing with support services creates a vicious cycle of trips in and out of the health care and criminal justice systems, not to mention homelessness, at a huge cost to the state. The good news is my son is doing fantastic now. He has been in recovery for the past 4 years, has his own condo that he purchased on his own, and he is working full time (and

paying taxes). It took him 8 years, however, to get to this place. I have no doubt that having adequate Supportive Housing available to him would have shortened this time to recovery. I tell you this so that you understand that many people with Mental Illness can and do recover, and go on to lead, normal & productive lives.

We applaud both the CT State Legislature as well as Governor Malloy for recognizing the value and significance of Supportive Housing, and encourage the members of this committee to look favorably on this proposed legislation.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.