



supportive housing
WORKS

The Need for Permanent Supportive Housing

Honorable Representatives and Senators:

My name is David Rich and I am the Executive Director of Supportive Housing Works, a collaborative effort to eliminate chronic homelessness in CT by 2015. My home address is 202 Farnum Road in Lakeville, CT. I am here today in support of Proposed Bill No 6052 and to urge the integration of permanent supportive housing into all multi-family developments with in the state.

According to "Reaching Home: A Ten Year Plan to End Long-Term Homelessness in Connecticut," 33,000 people – including 13,000 children – experience homelessness at some point during the year. Worse still, homelessness in Connecticut is increasing. Emergency shelters are full; the length of stay in shelters has increased; and turnaways have increased by over 200% from 2000 to 2010.

At any given time, approximately half of Connecticut's homeless people are experiencing long-term or chronic homelessness - that is, without acceptable permanent housing for more than 90 days. A significant percentage of today's homeless population suffers from chronic mental illnesses, often combined with a history of addiction so there is an increased demand for existing services as well as a need for new programs and services that address the complex needs of today's homeless population. As the "Reaching Home" report states, "the enormous public cost of this emergency care is exceeded only by the misery of people needlessly trapped in years of homelessness."

Permanent Supportive Housing is a proven strategy to stop long-term homelessness. Simply put, it is the cost-effective combination of affordable housing with supportive services that help people live more stable, productive lives. After entering Permanent Supportive Housing, tenants reduce their use of inpatient and crisis-oriented services, increase their incomes, and are likely to be employed or participate in education or job training programs, and report that they are functioning more independently than in the past.¹ The annual cost of supporting a household in permanent supportive housing is estimated at less than \$10,000 per year, a 50% to 67% reduction from the cost of maintaining households in shelters.²

To eliminate chronic homelessness in Connecticut the Reaching Home Campaign has targeted the creation of 10,000 new supportive housing units in Connecticut by 2015. We have already created 4,000 units so, therefore, have 6,000 units to go. The Reaching Home Campaign brings together an incredible array of partners and resources from throughout the State – and beyond.

¹ Connecticut Supportive Housing Demonstration Program, Evaluation Report

² Per estimates by the Corporation for Supportive Housing

The Campaign includes:

- Scores of well trained social service providers ready and able to provide high quality social services to the homeless in all 169 towns in Connecticut;
- Support from a large number of for-profit developers willing to set aside units for the homeless in their market-rate and mixed-income developments;
- Most, if not all for-profit and non-profit developers seeking state & federal capital financing for affordable housing are willing to set aside up to 20% of their units for the homeless;
- Housing Authorities have already committed over 300 Housing Choice Rental Vouchers for the homeless; and
- Strong funding from the federal government to support housing and services for homeless veterans through the VA. Nationwide over 20% of the homeless are veterans.

These initiatives can potentially create thousands of units of permanent supportive housing. However, these units will not be created without further support from the State of Connecticut. State housing policy can and should provide powerful incentives for integrating permanent supportive housing into all multifamily housing developments throughout the State. PSH requirements should be incorporated into all state housing funds, including HOME, Housing Trust Fund, LIHTC, HTCC and Flex funds.

The current LIHTC QAP provides a strong foundation to build from - in the last two LIHTC rounds 140 units were set aside for the homeless. In addition, DECD now also provides strong incentives for developers to set-aside units for the homeless. We are grateful for these efforts in support of the homeless. But we urge the state to go farther. Providing incentives and provisions for developers to set aside units is expedient and cost effective, in fact it does NOT cost the state any new allocation of resources. Most importantly, set-asides work!

We have a great number of wonderful examples including City Trust & East Main Mews in Bridgeport and Fair Street in Norwalk that have successfully integrated PSH into larger mixed income and market rate developments; in fact in Bridgeport over 95% of multifamily developments over 8 units - whether affordable, mixed income or market rate - have PSH set asides.

Our goal is to integrate the homeless in every new development throughout the state. It can be done - especially with strong leadership from the state - through clearly affirming these goals in the Proposed Bill 6052, *An Act Concerning Supportive Housing*. Thank you for your time this morning and for your continued commitment as a vital partner to ending chronic homelessness throughout Connecticut.

David B Rich
March 1st, 2011