



Written Testimony of Carol Walter, Executive Director

RE: The Security Deposit Guarantee Program

In Support of: S.B. No. 1013, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Human Services (*with recommended changes*); and

S.B. No. 1146 An Act Concerning the Reservation of Security Deposit Guarantees to Assist Participants in the Section 8 Housing Choice Program and the Rental Assistance Program With Mobility Moves.

Before the Human Services Committee

March 15, 2011

Representative Terczyak, Senator Musto and members of the Committee, thank you for considering our testimony.

According to our newly published *Portraits of Homelessness in Connecticut*, Connecticut's emergency shelters have exceeded 100% capacity for well over a year. Almost 15,000 individuals used our emergency and transitional housing programs last year. The research indicates that far more families experience housing instability and homelessness than can be served by our fragile prevention and shelter system -- *an estimated 40,000 families are "doubled up" (staying with family or friend for economic reasons) in Connecticut.*

The federal stimulus-funded homeless prevention and rapid re-housing program, which has provided assistance to prevent homelessness for more than 3,500 people in just over one year, exhausts its funding very soon. Half of the Connecticut programs have already closed intake for prevention and the rest will follow soon. High unemployment and the high cost of housing have contributed to a groundswell of need for this program.

Good news: we know how to end homelessness in Connecticut. State government and local communities have prevented increases in chronic homelessness through the development of more than 4,000 units of supportive housing over the last ten years. However, supportive housing alone will only help us end homelessness for a small portion of the homeless population in Connecticut. (Less than 1/5 of our homeless residents have chronic needs which are best served through supportive housing.)

The federal strategic plan to end homelessness, *Opening Doors*, and the nascent work in Connecticut to create a similar plan for our state, sets bold goals for ending

homelessness for all populations. New federal laws create new challenges, requirements and outcome measures for state and local communities this year.

The two bills before you provide key tools in assisting families to access affordable housing and achieve stability and prosperity.

S.B. 1013 would re-open the Security Deposit Guarantee Program, enabling many households to exit shelter or obtain short term stability and economic security. However, SB 1013 would change the look back/waiting period for families who have received SDGP assistance from 18 months to five years. Lower-income families typically experience mobility much more often than every five years. We must assure that the Security Deposit Guarantee Program is re-opened and that it is accessible to homeless families to prevent homelessness and return quickly to housing if they do become homeless. We ask you to reject this provision. ***We believe and 18-24 month look back period is more appropriate in this context.***

We also support the proposed no-cost amendment to Section 27 of S.B. 1013 to help SDGP tenants against whom no claims are made. We want to allow a tenant to be able to transfer a security deposit guarantee to another apartment if, at the time they move, their landlord agrees in writing to waive making a claim against the security deposit guarantee. In addition it makes sense to have no restriction on applications by second-time applicants if no claim was made against the first guarantee.

Finally, **CCEH fully supports S.B. 1146** setting aside 10% of the SDGP for eligible rental assistance program and Section 8 participants to move to high opportunity areas as proposed by the CT Fair Housing Center.