



**Testimony of Erin Boggs, Esq. In Support of Senate Bill (Raised 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**

My name is Erin Boggs. I am an attorney and the Deputy Director of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. I am here today to testify in support of Raised Bill 1146 which would reserve 10% of the Security Deposit Guarantee program funds for people working through DSS's three mobility counseling programs to make moves to lower poverty areas.

At its core this is a modest, budget neutral proposal that will help families with housing subsidies who are interested in making "mobility" moves to lower poverty areas. The Security Deposit Guarantee program is a DSS initiative that guarantees security deposits to landlords on behalf of people participating in housing subsidy programs. Three mobility counseling agencies assist DSS in helping families with subsidies who are interested in finding housing in lower poverty areas.

Families interested in making these moves face many hurdles – finding new transportation and childcare, higher suburban rents, housing discrimination and the need to pay a security deposit based on the higher rent. The mobility counseling programs cite the lack of a security deposit as one of the major reasons interested families do not make mobility moves.

Over the last several months I have spoken to clients of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center and the mobility counseling agencies about mobility moves. Some of these clients have made mobility moves and others have desperately wanted to make such moves but been prevented due to the lack of a security deposit. Many of these clients could not take time away from work to come here today, but I want to give you a sense of why making a mobility move is important to them.

Our clients want to make mobility moves for very basic and understandable reasons – the want their kids to go to thriving schools. They want to be near grocery stores with healthy food. They want their kids to play outside. In many cases they actually want to be closer to their jobs. What amazed me about my conversations with our clients is that there was one common theme that I did not expect came up unsolicited in each interview: finding a peaceful neighborhood.

A growing body of research is finding that moves out of poverty concentrated areas can have drastic positive affects on children. Exposure to violent crime can actually affect the neural development of children<sup>1</sup>, as can exposure to lead paint.<sup>2</sup> Both of these risks are more likely to be present in higher poverty neighborhoods.<sup>3</sup> Emergency room visits for kids with asthma drastically decrease when they move out of high poverty environments.<sup>4</sup> Low income children who have had the chance to attend school at higher income schools significantly outperform their counterparts attending poverty concentrated schools.<sup>5</sup>

Please support this modest proposal to give families using housing subsidies a shot at opportunity. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Turner, Margery Austin, Lynette A. Rawlings, "Promoting Neighborhood Diversity: Benefits, Barriers, and Strategies," Urban Institute (August 2009) at p. 2. See also Sampson, R.J., Raudenbush, S.W., & Earls, F. 1997. "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multi-Level Study of Collective Efficacy." *Science* 277: 918-924. Cookson, Clive. "Poverty mars formation of infant brains." *Financial Times.com* 16 February 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Nigg, Joel T. et al. "Blood Lead Levels Associated with Clinically Diagnosed Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Mediated Weak Cognitive Control." *Biological Psychiatry*. Vol. 63, no. 3: 325-331.

<sup>3</sup> See Turner and Nigg, *supra*.

<sup>4</sup> Anderson, Laurie M. et al., "Providing Affordable Family Housing and Reducing Residential Segregation by Income: A Systematic Review," *Am. J. Prev. Med.* (2003) 24 (3S) at p. 54 (citing to additional studies). See also Engdahl, Lora, "New Homes, New Neighborhoods, New Schools: A Progress Report on the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program," Poverty & Race Research Action Council (October 2009) at p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Schwartz, Heather, *Housing Policy Is School Policy: Economically Integrative Housing Promotes Economic Success in Montgomery County Maryland*, Century Fund (2010). Available at <http://tcf.org/publications/pdfs/housing-policy-is-school-policy-pdf/Schwartz.pdf>.