

Testimony of Phyllis Fusco of New Opportunities, Inc. before the Human Services Committee in Support of Senate Bill 1146 (Raised), 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 Phyllis Fusco. I am a representative of New Opportunities Inc, a community action agency whose mission is to establish relationships that end poverty. I oversee the Department of Social Services' Western Region Housing Mobility Program. The housing mobility program is a program that provides housing search assistance to participants on state and federal rental subsidies who want to move to lower poverty areas.

Often very low income and homeless clients who have waited years for this subsidy lose the opportunity to secure permanent housing because they can not afford a security deposit.

DSS' security deposit guarantee program provides landlords with a guarantee of a security deposit on behalf of this population so that families can leverage already available housing resources which reduces the costs of homelessness. Since March of 2010, New Opportunities has had the pleasure of providing services that helped approximately 112 clients utilize their rental subsidies. Many of these clients have received assistance in securing a rental unit located in a low poverty neighborhood. Unfortunately we have also had to witness clients lose this opportunity because of not having the money for a security deposit.

By reserving security deposit guarantees to assist participants in the Section 8 Housing Choice Program and the Rental Assistance Program will increase the likelihood that EVERY mobility program participant will have the opportunity to secure a unit in a low- poverty / high opportunity neighborhood. This will not only allow Connecticut's most vulnerable families' to secure permanent housing—a basic need that no one should be without—but will also give their children a chance to attend thriving schools, play safely outdoors, and, eventually access the kind of school networks that lead to fulfilling jobs later in life.

I ask that you support the reservation of security deposit guarantees to assist participants in the Section 8 Housing Choice Program and the Rental Assistance Program with mobility moves. Thank you.