

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF  
PROPOSED BILL 5142 & 5259  
An Act Requiring Public Hearings on the Location of Group Homes.

Representative Gentile, Senator Cassano, members of the Planning and Development Committee:

My name is Paul Rosin and I am the Executive Director of Community Residences Inc., which is a not for profit multi-service agency that operates group homes, day programs, community support services, and foster care homes for the State Departments of Developmental Services, Children and Families, and Social Services. I am here to testify regarding Proposed Bills 5142 & 5259: An Act Requiring Public Hearings on the Location of Group Homes.

Over the past twenty years, I have coordinated the development and licensing of thirty-five group homes that serve children and adults with developmental disabilities in Connecticut. Given the needs of the State and the consumers, these homes typically needed to be opened quickly and efficiently. Connecticut General Statute Section 8-3e, states that group homes with 6 or less beds designed for adults with mental retardation or for children are to be treated like any other single family residence. Without this law, I am convinced that many of these homes may not have been developed.

In 2006 CRI opened four 6-bed group homes for DCF in less than six months. This included locating, purchasing, and renovating the homes to accommodate a total of 24 children that would have been homeless without the development. In order to ensure that the municipalities and the neighbors were aware of the nature of the facility, and to prevent misinformation and confusion, CRI took the following actions:

- At the time that the homes were in development and prior to purchase CRI contacted DCF, the local zoning officials, building inspectors and Fire marshals regarding the plans for the identified homes and to determine if there were any local ordinances or concerns in regards to the facility.
- The local officials were made fully aware in regards to who was purchasing the homes and for what purpose.

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- Prior to opening the homes, CRI held an open house at each site to provide an opportunity for neighbors to meet the Agency and ask any questions that they may have.

This is a procedure that many Agencies utilize when opening a group home. It is proactive, honest and professional and will make the introduction of a group home into a neighborhood much easier for all concerned.

Given the need of the State of Connecticut to develop local, community based options for over 300 children with behavioral, psychiatric and developmental disabilities, who are currently in costly out of state facilities, Proposed Bills 5142 & 5259 needs to be rejected. Special public hearings on the development of group homes for people with disabilities and/or children are clearly discriminatory, and, it will make it impossible to open these programs in a cost effective and timely manner. I strongly urge you to reject this legislation. If it becomes law, Connecticut will continue to send its most vulnerable children out of state for care at a greater cost to taxpayers and not treat them in their community where they deserve to be.

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