

Testimony before the Public Health Committee

Wed. 3/2/11

Barbara Albert

Good afternoon chairs and members of the Public Health Committee, also to everyone else.

My name is Barbara Albert, registered voter, Hartford renter, Advocate for Human Rights, and Multiply Medically challenged Human Being. I'm disabled, some visible, most not. I do volunteer work when able. I'm also on Medicare and Medicaid.

My testimony concerns Proposed Bill No. S.B. 540, and any other proposed or raised bill, concerning written Mandatory Disclosure concerning Bed Bugs, whether it is by landlords to prospective tenants, motel/hotel owners, real estate agents, or sellers of their houses, or condominiums.

Recently, I received a copy of an article from the 'Connecticut Post', an article written by Brian Lockhart, called "A Debate with Bite, Bill would require bedbug warnings", by my Representative, Matt Ritter, who knows how stressed out, freaked out, and physically ill I've been about this since our conversation last month. There's been an ongoing problem with bedbugs where I pay rent, since September 2009. I finally started seeing them in the apartment where I am since July 2010. In January, 2011, I saw more, and was told by the realty company to "wait till I see more"... "Was I sure they were bedbugs?" Just last weekend, I saw more. I have no bed, haven't since August 2010. I am still 'living' out of garbage bags. Some tenants and I got a Petition together, because extermination is part of "Building and Grounds Maintenance", in our leases. My body not only gets massively stressed out by just seeing them, I also become violently ill. I also get just as ill from any chemicals used. Upcoming next week – will be time #4. I'm still 'doing phone tag' with the License and Inspection person. Representative M. Ritter has also tried on my behalf.

I even paid rent into housing court last year for a while. All that resulted from that was feeling further humiliation and shame about seeing that I'm "indigent", in black and white. I needed to throw out many of my few possessions, including clothes, books, Advocacy material, and yes, my bed, just to name some. Due to still having stuff in garbage bags, I don't know where anything is. I've refused to open them because, somehow, I knew they were not gone. I still see some of my neighbors with bite marks. I already have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, before seeing, these things, crawling.

How I found them, rather, them finding me. Was in bed, watching TV, trying to get to sleep, and I saw something crawling across my pillow, and felt something on my face. I turned on the light, only to be freaked. I further stared looking and they, (the bedbugs), were crawling all over the pillow, the cushion I used to have to help raise the elevation of my head, (for acid reflux purposes). Then I continued to look in my bed clothes, blankets, and my clothes. They were all over. And I am not a dirty person, I'm not 'Suzy home Maker', nor am a slob. More like; 'lived in'. I had to throw out a hand made quilt someone

had given me for a Christmas gift years ago, and because they were so many you could barely make out the pattern to the quilt, I will probably not ever get another quilt. I was not only enraged and sickened; I automatically started having suicidal thoughts, Also activated the I.B.S. (that's the way my body deals with stress, usually). Yes I contacted my Doctor the next day. After stripping my bed into garbage bags, I took a shower. I used to think that being molested, what seemed forever, that I was not ever going to feel clean from that... like I wrote before, I already have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Other people need to know, they are not alone if this has happened to them too.

I was finally able to speak with the License and Inspection inspector, only just this morning, 3/7/11, almost two months of trying to contact him, with Rep. M. Ritter's help too. This whole process isn't over yet either, the property management will send someone to "spray"- which is known to be useless, with the exception of my becoming horrifically ill, again, because of the chemicals. I won't be in the apartment for several hours after, getting sick has happened every time before, I don't expect it to be different this time either.

This whole process is something that has/is so beyond stressful; it has totally exacerbated all my 'psych stuff' and the suicidal thoughts are still here. Not acted on, but still here.

In the 'Connecticut Post' article, it mentions that "this notification bill could unfairly penalize responsible landlords." I believe that responsible people generally take care of business, responsibly.

Please support bills that make Mandatory Disclosure, much needed law(s).

Unlike the recent 'Connecticut Post' article, I know I'm not the only one, who doesn't just get the "heebie – jeebies" when it comes to bedbugs.

Thank you for listening.