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CONNECTICUT FIRE MARSHALS ASSOCIATION

CT General Assembly
Public Safety and Security Committee

March 3, 2011

Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan, and Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee. My name is Kevin Kowalski and I have been in the fire service for the last 37 years and Fire Marshal of Simsbury for the last 25 years. I am here today on behalf of the CT Fire Marshals Association. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today in support of two bills before you.

HB 6378 AA Requiring an Automatic Fire Extinguishing System in all One and Two Family Homes. The fire service has been working to have automatic sprinklers installed in dwellings for 15 years. We believe that this is the best way to reduce the fire deaths, better than the smoke detectors did in 1985 when we asked that the detectors be installed in 1 and 2 family homes. The facts are the same; people are still being killed by fire, just over 3500 in this great country, in the place where they feel the safest, their own home. I will not go over the obvious facts that these will save lives; there is no disputing that fact. The opponents of this bill claim that prices, design, water supply, are problematic and that sprinklers are unwarranted because "new houses will not burn." There is nothing further from the truth. When does a new house become and old house that burns? Studies have found that the building materials and contents of the home are more flammable than ever before and will fail catastrophically in very short order.

Things have changed nationwide, and they have changed for the better. Connecticut operates with two codes written by two publishers and organizations: the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) which has been requiring residential sprinklers for some time and the IRC (International Residential Code.) The Basic residential 1and 2 family code from the ICC (International Code Council) has adopted the requirement to have residential sprinklers installed. This should be automatic for CT. However, there has been a great deal of push back from the industry, which represents a majority on the codes and standards committees that approve changes to the codes. They have elected to study it some more. We are requesting, like CO detectors in the homes and schools, the installation of smoke detectors in homes back in 1985, the installation of sprinklers in schools and convalescent homes be required by statute, that sprinklers be installed in all one and two family homes.

The sprinkler industry has taken on this project with a vengeance, putting more resources into design and development like never before because of this nationwide requirement. New systems do not require large amounts of water; they do not require connections to public water supplies. They are using less than 7 gallons of water in a typical room and contents fire, and allowing people to move back in within a day or two. Not to mention saving lives. There has been a reduction in the cost of installation in areas of the country that requires it because the industry

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can ramp up. California has embraced the use of sprinklers and watched the prices fall by almost half. We have not spoken to anyone who has noted any substantial reduction in house sales because of this requirement.

Implementation of this would be January 1, 2013 and would give the industry and The CFMA, as a partnership, the time and opportunity to prepare for the installations and to work out any issues that may come along, such as with the water purveyor's licensing and new technology testing, etc. In short, fire deaths drop by an average of 50% when smoke detectors are required. This is the next opportunity to obtain a substantial reduction in those unfortunate numbers that are published each year.

The CFMA supports SB 968 AAC Special Effects as written. This bill will assist both the State and local fire marshals in allowing the use of new technology and regulations pertaining to professionally directed and commercially made special effects.

Thank you for this opportunity.

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