

Senator Gomes, Representative Butler, members of the Committee:

I am State Senator Michael McLachlan, and I am here to speak in favor of **Senate Bill 293: AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING ASSISTANCE FOR VETERANS.**

This bill would give preference to veterans who apply to state programs for affordable or subsidized housing.

Our veterans have fought for us overseas and they have made huge sacrifices. They should not have to fight to get affordable housing when they return to Connecticut.

For those who have served in the military and are returning from active duty with disabilities, affordable housing provides the connection they need to reintegrate into life back at home.

This bill puts our veterans at the front of the affordable housing line, and they deserve to be there. We owe them a debt of gratitude that we can never fully repay, but this bill is one way to show our veterans that Connecticut will never forget their service.

Many of our veterans left unstable housing situations when they left Connecticut to fight for our country. When they returned, that instability remained and in many cases it was worse than it was before. We need to ease their burden. Our goal is to prevent homelessness at all costs.

Here's the big picture: Lack of affordable housing is a primary catalyst for homelessness among all veterans according to a 2007 study by the National Alliance to End Homelessness. About 800 veterans are homeless in Connecticut on any one day.

As you may know, I hail from Danbury, where we are quite proud of our successful "Housing for Heroes" program which we launched in 2008. The program provides shelter, transitional housing and a path to a permanent home. What a positive difference it makes in the life of a veteran to get that housing. It puts them on that path to permanency and stability. I hope you will agree with me that they have earned it.

Not only does this bill make financial sense. It is also the right thing to do.

I urge the committee to support our Connecticut veterans and vote in favor of Bill 293.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael McLachlan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

State Senator Michael McLachlan