



Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing
February 15, 2012

**Testimony of Betsy Crum,
Executive Director, Connecticut Housing Coalition**

Support: HB 5014, Governor's Budget Bill, which includes:

- **\$1.5 million for new Rental Assistance Program (RAP) certificates to be used in conjunction with public housing revitalization;**
- **150 new supportive housing RAP Certificates to be used in scattered site housing; and**
- **Creation of a State Office of Housing and consolidation of state housing programs.**

Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Betsy Crum, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Housing Coalition. The Connecticut Housing Coalition represents the broad, vibrant network of community-based affordable housing activity across the state. Our more than 250 member organizations include nonprofit developers, human service agencies, resident associations, and diverse other housing practitioners and advocates. Founded in 1981, the Coalition works to expand housing opportunity and to increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing in Connecticut.

I would like to express my strong support for the HB 5014, *An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2013* and its recommendations concerning affordable and supportive housing. At the Connecticut Housing Coalition, we hear every day from families who need housing, and understand the critical role it plays in creating a healthy, sustainable state. The Governor's recent plan to make a sustained and significant investment in creating and revitalizing supportive and affordable housing signals his great commitment to the health, prosperity and sustainability of our state and to the well-being of all of the citizens within it. HB 5014 would implement several integral components of that plan, and I would like to express my support for each of them.

- **Rental Assistance Program Certificates for State Housing Portfolio Revitalization:** The bill authorizes 150 units of new project-based Rental Assistance Program (RAP) certificates to support comprehensive revitalization in state-financed moderate rental housing developments. Our current investment in 17,000 state-funded affordable housing units is a gem, and we need to protect and polish this gem and ensure that it is sustainable and available to meet our current and future community needs. This initiative will begin to protect over fifty years of state housing investments, safeguarding housing assets that would cost well over \$3 billion if they had to be replaced. The time to undertake this



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revitalization effort is now, as we cannot afford to lose the affordable housing we already have.

- Rental Assistance Program Certificates for 150 new Scattered-site Supportive Housing units: Supportive housing is a solution to homelessness that has been proven to work. It provides safe and secure rental housing that is affordable to families and individuals with very low incomes, offers independent apartments in existing housing units, and is permanent, with no time limits provided the tenant complies with the terms of the lease. Significantly, it also provides support services that are designed to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the whole family. These services, delivered by skilled staff, ensure long-term stability and family success of the family. The state's experience over the past 10 years has confirmed that supportive housing increases independence, decreases the use of expensive emergency and inpatient services, and has a positive impact on the surrounding economy. It works, and should be consistently invested in until we have ended homelessness in Connecticut.
- State Office of Housing and Program Consolidation: The Governor's Budget proposal combines state housing functions in a new State Office of Housing within DECD to provide leadership and facilitate coordination. It also transfers and consolidates a number of housing programs presently administered in different state agencies. We believe that this change will have several advantages for everyone who accesses state housing programs. The present system is fragmented and can sometimes be bureaucratic and cumbersome to maneuver. By consolidating housing production, operation, and financing for the continuum of housing needs, affordable housing can be created and maintained in a way that is more streamlined and responsive to the people who live in it. Moreover, by concurrently establishing strong leadership and vision in the agency that administers these programs, affordable housing can be elevated as the cornerstone to family and community success.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments, and I would be happy to respond to any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Crum



**Connecticut
Housing
Coalition**

Executive Director