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Testimony of Amanda Girardin

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H.B. 5014

Good afternoon, Senator Harp, Representative Walker and other honorable members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Amanda Girardin; I am the Project Manager with Journey Home, the implementation entity for the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in Greater Hartford. I am here today to ask you to vote yes for H.B. 5014, specifically as it pertains to an increase in bonding money for affordable and supportive housing and rental subsidies.

Through my job I work with people who are homeless, have been homeless, or are at risk of becoming homeless. For many of these people finding suitable, affordable housing is their most difficult task. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Connecticut is facing a deficit of greater than 70,000 affordable and available rental units for the poorest members of our state. Wages are not keeping pace with the housing market. The State of Homelessness in America found that 78% of poor households, or 64,000 households, in Connecticut are severely housing cost burdened, paying more than 50% of their income for housing. This translates into households having very little income for food, clothing, medical, and other needs for themselves or their children.

Another reason for the deficit in affordable housing is that affordable developments, that that once got capital subsidies, have now fallen into disrepair and need rehabilitation to be fit for human habitation. Most of the state funded public housing stock is an example of this. The \$30 in bonding to preserve and upgrade this portfolio, combined with the suggested 150 RAP subsidies, are essential to allow for the renting of these units to low-income households. The additional \$70 million for affordable housing development is necessary to go beyond the preservation of current units to actually increase the state's affordable housing stock.

For those experiencing chronic homelessness, multiple and compounding obstacles such as poverty, mental illness, substance abuse and disabilities form additional barriers to housing. Permanent supportive housing is a proven solution to homelessness, getting people: off the streets or out of shelters, into preventative health care and in many cases back into the work force, saving tax payers money. According to HMIS (the Homeless Management Information System), 61% of adult clients experiencing homelessness in the Greater Hartford regions cited "Cost of Housing/Expenses exceeds income" as a top reason for their homelessness. The 150 RAP subsidies for supportive housing proposed by Governor Malloy, will go a long way towards helping chronically homeless households secure a home.

Despite the proposed 300 vouchers to access public or supportive housing, about 2,000 more households will remain on the RAP waiting list which has been closed to new applicants for years. We implore you to consider including funding for additional RAP certificates to be made available to low and very low income families throughout Connecticut. These subsidies could successfully prevent "at risk" households from falling into homelessness and lift many others out of their current state of homelessness.

The emergency shelter system in Greater Hartford is overburdened and turning away hundreds of requests each month. No matter how hard our shelter system and its case managers work, we will not succeed in reducing the homeless population unless there are stable and safe housing units for this population to exit into. I ask you to please vote yes for H.B. 5014 and support the creation of more affordable and supportive housing throughout the state of Connecticut. Thank you for your time.





Journey Home, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that works collaboratively to implement the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in the Greater Hartford region by initiating best practices and innovative, sustainable solutions to prevent and end homelessness.

The towns covered by this Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness are:

Andover	Manchester
Avon	Marlborough
Bloomfield	Newington
Bolton	Rocky Hill
Canton	Simsbury
East Granby	Somers
East Hartford	South Windsor
East Windsor	Stafford
Ellington	Suffield
Enfield	Tolland
Farmington	Vernon
Glastonbury	West Hartford
Granby	Wethersfield
Hartford	Windsor
Hebron	Windsor Locks

For more information on the current and developing initiatives of Journey Home and its partner organizations please visit: www.JourneyHomeCT.org

