



Testimony of Howard Rifkin, Partnership for Strong Communities on the DECD Budget Proposal

Appropriations Committee, February 15, 2012

My name is Howard Rifkin. I am the Executive Director of the Partnership for Strong Communities, a statewide housing advocacy organization dedicated to finding solutions to end and prevent homelessness, expand affordable housing and create strong, vibrant communities.

I am testifying in support of the Governor's proposal to consolidate state housing functions in DECD. I do so on behalf of the Partnership and from the perspective of having worked on housing issues in this state for over 30 years and as a representative of State Treasurer Denise Nappier on CHFA for twelve years.

While the consolidation of housing functions needs to be done thoughtfully and carefully, I believe that this is a tremendous opportunity to ensure that housing support, redevelopment and development is done in a coordinated and more effective way. For example, RAP certificates can and should be viewed as an asset that can support the capital development of needed affordable housing. I would point out that some local housing authorities like Bridgeport has tried this quite successfully. Ideas like that and others can be developed with the resources and functions under one agency.

Governor Malloy has shown that he is a champion for affordable and supportive housing in committing more funds than we have seen in twenty-five years - close to \$500 million over the next ten years. He understands the imperative of housing opportunity as a key component to Connecticut's future. This consolidation can support the urgency that he has placed on these initiatives. Some have argued that housing can never be an equal partner in DECD because of its primary focus on economic development. I believe that view is not supported by the facts since Governor Malloy took office in January 2011. Beyond the record capital commitment, the Governor, with support from the General Assembly, has expanded rental subsidies for supportive housing, the successful FUSE program, public housing, and congregate housing.

We have an opportunity to get this right: creating supportive housing opportunity, affordable housing, preservation, and workforce housing in town centers and around train and bus stations. The state will have a much better chance at success with this proposal.

I urge your support of this reorganization.

I also want to just mention that in the DECD budget proposal is an additional 300 rap certificates; half for supportive housing and the other half for public housing authorities. We urge your support for that as well.

