TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

March 8, 2012
Susan Whetstone, Interim President
Connecticut Housing Finance Authority

HB 5016 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee, I am Susan Whetstone, Interim President for Connecticut Housing Finance Authority. In 1969, the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) was created by legislation for the purpose of helping to alleviate the shortage of affordable housing for low-and moderate-income families and persons in Connecticut. CHFA is a self-sustaining, quasi-public organization, which uses its resources to provide below-market interest rate mortgages for single-family ownership and multifamily rental properties. Tax-exempt bonds are the primary source of mortgage capital for CHFA's housing programs. *Since its founding, CHFA has provided mortgage financing for more than 127,000 first time homebuyers, and has financed the development of more than 35,000 affordable rental homes.*

I am here today to express my strong support for the Governor's Budget proposal to establish an Office of Housing within the Department of Economic and Community Development and to consolidate housing programs currently administered by the Department of Social Services, the Department of Children and Families and the Office of Policy and Management into DECD under this new Office of Housing. The programs to be transferred are the Rental Assistance Program, Residences for Persons with Aids, Emergency Shelters for the Homeless, Special Projects for Homeless Shelters, Transitional Living, Housing Mediation Services, Service and Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence, Rent Bank, Security Deposit Guarantee Program, and the Renters Rebate Program.

CHFA supports the Governor's goal to consolidate programs under DECD to provide better opportunities to leverage resources and work to address the changing needs of housing in a way that is more streamlined and responsive to the persons in need of affordable housing.

The Governor's proposal for a Deputy Commissioner of Housing under DECD represents his strong commitment and leadership for affordable housing in Connecticut.

I am confident that DECD Commissioner Catherine Smith will work tirelessly to ensure that the new Office of Housing is established as a strong arm of DECD fully capable of providing enhanced coordination, collaboration and oversight for all the state's housing resources.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.