

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

March 8, 2012

Ron Angelo, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Economic and Community Development

House Bill No. 5016

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Hello Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the committee, my name is Ron Angelo and I am Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 5016, which includes Governor Malloy's proposal to consolidate housing programs within the department. Commissioner Smith regrets she is unable to be with you today to personally express her strong support for this important measure.

As you are aware, DECD's mission is to develop and implement strategies that increase the state's economic competitiveness. We do this by attracting and retaining businesses and jobs, revitalizing neighborhoods and communities, ensuring quality housing, and preserving and promoting cultural and tourism assets.

I am here today representing DECD in its capacity as the lead state agency on all housing matters.

The Governor's proposal is a key part of his larger plan to strengthen the state's focus on—and support of—housing programs for Connecticut residents. Specifically this bill will establish an Office of Housing within DECD and consolidate housing programs currently administered by the Department of Social Services and the Office of Policy and Management under this new office.

There are many benefits to this proposal.

- First, centralizing the state's housing functions will make it less confusing for those seeking housing assistance. Currently clients must navigate several different programs and agencies to receive the help they need. Under the Governor's proposal, shelters, transitional living, and permanent affordable housing programs will all be organized into one entity, creating a seamless transition for clients and streamlining DECD's process for providing individuals and families with appropriate housing options.
- Productivity will be enhanced by this comprehensive approach to housing assistance. Developers, advocates, municipalities, federal entities, and our quasi-public partners will all at once have a single point of contact — improving DECD's ability to collaborate with these partners. More collaboration will help simplify and streamline procedures, which will translate into opportunities to facilitate better results.

- This consolidation will provide a single voice and the most effective structure for strong leadership on the state's housing issues. Commissioner Smith also is chairwoman of the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) Board. I can tell you firsthand, collaboration between the agencies has significantly improved and there is a coordinated approach to allocating resources that didn't exist before.
- Lastly, DECD will have the proper resources to take on these additional responsibilities. A new Office of Housing and a new Deputy Commissioner for Housing will ensure that increasing the state's affordable housing options remains a top priority for Connecticut policymakers.

It should be noted that Governor Malloy's proposed budget supports the changes outlined in HB 5016. It reallocates more than \$2 million to fund 300 new Rental Assistance Program Vouchers and expands the Congregate Housing Program. The budget also includes a commitment in personnel to ensure that DECD is properly staffed to fulfill its obligations with regard to these programs.

I respectfully request the Committee's support for the Governor's proposal. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.