

Legal Assistance Resource Center

❖ of Connecticut, Inc. ❖

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S.B. 25 -- Public housing revitalization

Finance and Bonding Committee public hearing -- March 12, 2012
Testimony of Raphael L. Podolsky

Recommended Committee action: APPROVAL OF THE BILL

We strongly support the housing provisions of S.B. 25, which are contained specifically in Sections 27 to 30 of this bill.

Connecticut is one of four states that, more than half a century ago, led the nation by using state funds to finance public housing. The state family public housing program is known as "Moderate Rental Housing." Unlike federal public housing, however, that housing came with no operating subsidies on the assumption that it would pay for itself. Federal public housing, in contrast, recognized that low-income housing for people in great financial need would necessarily require subsidy, because the occupants would not have enough income to be able to pay the full cost of the housing. In the 1970s and 1980s, Connecticut occasionally bonded rehabilitation funds for its state public housing. Until very recently, however, that practice had largely stopped. The result was predictable -- a decline in maintenance of the housing and, in some cases, the actual boarding up and loss of critically-needed units.

S.B. 25, for the first time in decades, confronts this problem head-on by authorizing bonding for the first year of a ten-year program to rehabilitate and revitalize our state public housing stock. In particular, it includes \$30 million for the first year of that plan. These funds will not only have an enormous impact on public housing itself but, like any rehabilitation or construction program, will serve as a powerful economic driver for the economy. Continuing to ignore the decline of the public housing stock does not save money for anyone. It merely increases the cost of rehabilitation. The revitalization of state-financed public housing is long overdue.

S.B. 25 also explicitly includes \$12.5 million for the development of congregate housing and \$1 million for accessibility modifications for persons transitioning from institutional care to less expensive home residency in the Money Follows the Person program.

We strongly urge the Finance Committee to approve this bill.