National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials
Connecticut Chapter
P. O. Box 93
Rockfall, CT 06481
Phone: (860) 508-4896
Fax: (860) 788-2331 **www.conn-nahro.org**

CONN-NAHRO VISION FOR NEW DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

CONN-NAHRO has reached out to its membership and sought input to develop some consensus on what the vision and role of a new State of Connecticut Department of Housing should be. CONN-NAHRO membership includes 106 Connecticut Housing Authorities and other non-profit and community development member agencies. CONN-NAHRO member agencies are charged with the vital responsibility of effectively managing or administering over 62,000 units of affordable housing in Connecticut, which house over 150,000 family/individuals. We feel the below points best represent the common theme voiced by our membership.

The State of Connecticut affordable housing delivery system is very complex and fragmented among many different providers and programs. The delivery of affordable housing crosses numerous political and municipal jurisdictions and is delivered by nonprofits, for-profits and public organizations each with different missions and each working to provide different components of the larger affordable housing spectrum. These organizations offer an array of services and manage a variety of programs that have complex regulatory and statutory requirements that are different from program to program.

The new Department of Housing (DOH) should seek to be the central policy creating department on state-wide housing policy. DOH should be the sole state agency to receive the reporting requirements and have oversight responsibilities as well as being the state agency that facilitates affordable housing preservation and creation. The key points regarding the vision and role of new Department of Housing are as follows:

> **DOH should be charged with creating a comprehensive statewide housing policy that includes the input of all stakeholders** - A challenging and critical component of the new DOH will be to provide a balanced perspective in housing policy development, which is inclusive and incorporates the feedback from all stakeholders to produce a meaningful state wide policy with measurable outcomes. A desirable solution would involve the inclusion of all stakeholders from all aspects of the affordable housing continuum in the development of a policy. The policy needs to be flexible to the communities that it serves and would

recognize that "one size does not fit all". The policy needs to carefully allocate the limited resources available by prioritizing needs to meet a state wide housing plan that produces a balance of *sustainable* housing options.

For example, the interagency council which is responsible for providing advice to the Commissioner of DOH does not currently include in its makeup, any current providers of housing, developers of housing and other core segments of the affordable housing spectrum. Policy creation should avoid a similar approach and utilize all key stakeholders.

DOH should be the Singular Agency Charged with Oversight and Reporting of State Housing Programs - A singular agency should be charged with program oversight and ultimately receive the reporting requirements of the various affordable housing programs.

By setting the agency up to perform these functions, it will have all the data to identify trends and measure outcomes of policy and to assist in creating policy revision from time to time.

The new DOH should also review the reporting requirements and work to clean the process of any duplicative requirements that result from multiple sources of funding and reduce the reporting requirements of low risk programs or programs that do not utilize monetary resources from the state.

The new DOH should look to review and evaluate existing regulations and statutes to identify inconsistent requirements or program conflicts. Improvements would enhance subsidy layering and overall operational efficiencies.

DOH Needs to Facilitate the Preservation of Existing Affordable Housing and Support the Effective Creation of New Housing - DOH can meet these goals by providing technical assistance, education, regular communication, advocacy and transparent processes which are inclusive of its affordable housing industry partners and allow partners to understand the environment in which they operate.

DOH should continue to preserve the state-housing portfolio with the understanding that capital needs must be supported and that a successful model requires a mix of tenant incomes in order to be financially sustainable. Preservation will require a mix of creative solutions including allowing income mixing in existing properties

from the current 80% up to 100% or 120% of AMI to help support lower rent structures where such models would be successful. Use of this in regions where it can be successful may allow subsidies to be used in other areas where such a model would not be as successful.

Work with partners to identify other creative solutions to help preserve and develop affordable housing units that would be consistent with the state affordable housing policy, maximizing both federal and state resources available to meet local needs. One example of this might be the conversion of an existing property to a local mixed income program which has affordability encumbrances on the property and might utilize some federal subsidies to provide for some deeply skewed income targeting.

CONN-NAHRO and our members look forward to the creation of the new State of Connecticut Department of Housing. CONN-NAHRO can help support the goal of providing increased advocacy and influence on effective housing policy and legislation. CONN-NAHRO is dedicated to working with decision makers at the local, state and federal levels to craft meaningful policy and legislation. We look forward to working with the DOH to play a key leadership role in shaping effective housing policies and programs in Connecticut.