



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

*TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND  
ELECTIONS COMMITTEE*

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Testimony Opposing Proposed Bill No. 5894

AN ACT DELAYING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF HOUSING AND  
ON AGING

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Senator Musto, Representative Jutila, Senator McLachlan, Representative Hwang, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Proposed Bill No. 5894, AN ACT DELAYING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF HOUSING AND ON AGING.

This bill proposes to amend the general statutes to delay the establishment of the Department of Housing and Department on Aging. I strongly oppose any delay in these important initiatives. First, it is important to note that both of these Departments have already been established per JSS Public Act 12-1 and are in the process of transitioning to their respective new roles. The Governor's Bills No. 6366, An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Department of Housing, and No. 837, An Act Concerning the Department on Aging, further implement the departments by specifying the appropriate transfers of functions, powers, duties, and personnel from existing agencies to the new departments. This bill would leave these new agencies in a state of flux, confusing newly defined departmental roles, and expending staff time and resources reverting back to a pre-transitional state, only to have them move forward again after the proposed delay.

The Department of Housing (DOH) demonstrates our dedication to developing a comprehensive approach to eliminating homelessness and meeting the housing needs of low- and moderate-income individuals, families, and communities within the state. Charged with providing centralized leadership for all housing-related matters, DOH's primary focus will be enhancing the supply of, and access to, safe and affordable housing in Connecticut. The Governor's proposed budget, as well as Governor's Bill No. 6366, outlines the details of this new department, transferring programs from the Department of Social Services, the Department of Economic and Community Development, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and the Office of Policy and

Management. This transition was guided by the Interagency Council on Affordable Housing, a thirteen-member entity charged with assisting in the planning and implementation of DOH. As statutorily required, the Council submitted a report to the Governor and Legislature on January 15, 2013 detailing their recommendations and findings, the most significant being that now is the right time to undertake this consolidation. Following this timeline, a Commissioner of Housing has already been named by the Governor, and a public hearing for her nomination has been scheduled next week. In addition to stalling significant progress in the implementation of a new agency whose centralized functions will make the state more effective and efficient, delaying the full realization of the DOH's programmatic goals will unnecessarily deny the residents of our state the benefits of the economic growth that derives from investing in quality and sustainable housing.

Similarly, the creation of the State Department on Aging (SDA) demonstrates our dedication to improving the quality of life of nearly one fifth of Connecticut's population. Both the Governor's proposed budget and Governor's Bill No. 827 implement this department by transferring the appropriate functions and programs from the Department of Social Services to SDA to allow elderly people to live with dignity, security, and independence. As our population ages, it is crucial to centralize and streamline the provision of services that create a safety net for our most vulnerable residents. Approximately 710,000 citizens in the state are over the age of 60, an increase of eighteen percent over a decade. Now is not the time to slow our momentum - we must continue to prepare for the future of all our residents by ensuring the existence of an entity whose sole purpose is to ensure the comprehensiveness of services and programs for Connecticut's senior citizens.

Both the Department of Housing and Department on Aging were created in reflection of the Governor's key policy priorities. Contrary to the stated purpose of Proposed Bill No. 5894, delaying the establishment of these entities will neither foster accountability nor efficiency in state government. Instead, it will unnecessarily waste the time, effort, and resources invested to date to create these streamlined agencies by not allowing our state residents to reap the benefits of centralized leadership these agencies will bring.

I would like to again thank the committee for the opportunity to submit this testimony. I respectfully request the Committee take no action on this bill and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.