

**James S. Marpe  
57 Morningside Drive South  
Westport, CT 06880**

**Testimony in Support of:**

**H.B. 5155 -- An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Senior Housing as  
Affordable Housing**

**H.B. 5626 – An Act Concerning Affordable Housing Built for Senior Citizens**

**Housing Committee**

**February 14, 2013**

Good morning, Chairmen Bartolomeo and Butler, Ranking Members McKinney and Miller and members of the Housing Committee. My name is Jim Marpe. I reside in Westport where I have been a member of the Board of Education and as well as a board member of Homes With Hope, our Town's non-governmental organization that addresses our local homeless population issues. In that role, I co-authored our strategy of permanent, affordable, supportive housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 5155 and HB 5626. These bills would allow senior housing to be included as affordable housing for purposes of meeting a town's 8-30g affordable housing requirements.

In a recent forum conducted by the Connecticut Commission on Aging, it was noted that the Connecticut population is already the 7<sup>th</sup> oldest in the nation by median age and getting older by the minute. Contrary to the usual image of retiring to Florida or Arizona, 90% of older Americans remain in the same county and even the same house that they lived in prior to retirement. And it is becoming clear that more and more seniors would prefer to "age in place" rather than move to a new, distant community. In Westport, over 20% of our population can be defined as "senior citizens"

In many communities like Westport, seniors want to remain because of the familiarity of the Town and the amenities that attracted them in the first place – even the schools with continuing education offerings and outstanding performing arts programs. The challenge for many seniors is that they do not want to, or cannot afford to, stay in the houses they have occupied for many years. Even if they can find a buyer, they cannot easily find an affordable living alternative in that community. Towns like Westport are pursuing market affordable senior housing alternatives, but are finding difficulty in achieving community acceptance. This is often because of the concern that 8-30g affordable housing requirements could open the door to non-residents while limiting the opportunity for long-time residents to occupy these market affordable apartments.

Unfortunately, the requirements of Statute 8-30g cause the residents of many towns to be concerned about overdevelopment. This resistance has resulted in many towns not meeting their affordable housing requirements. Even when there is support of affordable housing, there is concern that it will

be constructed at the expense of the character of the town or in locations far from mass transit and convenient shopping alternatives that are essential to people seeking affordable housing.

Market affordable senior housing should be included in the count of a town's overall affordable housing goal without regard to the income tests imposed by the 8-30g requirements. This would help address the need for more market affordable senior housing while helping towns achieve their affordable housing goals in a manner that addresses a growing local need without changing the character of a town or neighborhood.