



*Testimony before the Housing Committee*

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Good evening Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Butler, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee. I am Claudette Beaulieu, Deputy Commissioner for Programs at the Department of Social Services. I am here today to testify in support of **HB 6366, An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Department of Housing**.

This bill implements the recommendations of the Interagency Council on Affordable Housing, which were outlined in the Council's January 2013 report as required by Public Act 12-1 of the June 2012 Special Session.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) currently funds and administers many housing programs for low-income individuals. Accordingly, we were appointed to serve on the Interagency Council on which we actively participated at all scheduled meetings. The interactive and open process enabled a broad range of stakeholders to present examples of successful agency consolidations, agree on necessary principles ensure adequate, safe housing, discuss concerns, and make recommendations. The Interagency Council listened and deliberated in a very open and professional manner and completed their report in January of this year.

The Council's report presents sound rationale for the consolidation of similar housing-related programs, currently administered by several state agencies, into one entity. Under the current system, DSS administers the state's Rental Assistance Program, but the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) operates the state's Elderly Rental Assistance Program, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) administers the Elderly/Disabled Renters' Rebate Program, and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) provides rental assistance subsidies to certain individuals. This disjointed system can be confusing to state residents in need of housing assistance. A consolidated system is more consumer-friendly and will be considerably easier to navigate for potential and existing clients. In addition, the new department enhances the state's ability to create a comprehensive and coordinated housing policy for the state. For example, with the responsibility for homeless shelters, transitional living, and permanent affordable housing options all under one "roof," policies and programs can focus on a continuum of needs with shared outcomes and goals.

order to administer the Tax Relief for Elderly Renters program. The corrections are as follows:

- Line 1967 – delete “or (12) to any authorized representative of the”
- Lines 1968 and 1969 – delete in their entirety
- Line 1973 – after “chapter 32” insert “, or (12) to any authorized representative of the Commissioner of Housing for the purpose of verifying whether an applicant for the renters rebate program established by section 12-170d, as amended by this act, is a recipient of cash assistance from the Department of Social Services and the amount of such assistance”.

We applaud the work and efforts of the Interagency Council on Affordable Housing and look forward to our continued work with our sister state agencies to bring the Department of Housing to fruition.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening and I welcome any questions you may have.