

Testimony by  
James White, President,  
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Before the Housing Committee of the Connecticut Legislature  
Thursday, February 28, 2013

Good evening ladies and gentleman of the Housing Committee. My name is James White and I live at 22 Lourdes Court, Meriden. I am a single parent of two children. I am the President of the Publicly-assisted Housing Resident Network (PHRN). I am also the resident commissioner on the Meriden Housing Authority Board of Commissioners.

I am submitting testimony in support of **HB 6421: An Act Concerning Public Housing Grievance Procedures**. I'd like to remind the Committee that the original legislation calling for the Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development to develop regulations protecting public housing residents' rights was passed in 1988. A second bill that required the Department of Economic and Community Development to complete the process was raised two years ago. At that time, PHRN and the Connecticut Housing Coalition together agreed that the bill wasn't needed if, as the Department stated, it was very close to finalizing the regulations.

The regulations are important because they will provide uniform minimum standards for housing authority grievance procedures. They are intended to help housing authorities that do not have adequate procedures, because they will be able to adopt what the Department writes. Tenants have come forward with statements that public housing grievance procedures vary across the state. They expressed great frustration with grievance procedures that they considered inadequate, unfair, or ineffective.

This year, we hear that the Department is again close to completing the regulations. The language of HB 6421 states that if the grievance procedure hasn't been adopted by 2014, the Commissioner must issue a report to this Committee. This is not strong enough language. We would like the proposed language to be amended to state that the grievance procedure must be adopted by February 2014. Without amended language, Connecticut's public housing residents cannot be assured their need for transparency and uniformity will be met.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

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