

Stratford Housing Authority
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Date: February 07 2012

To: Connecticut State Joint Committee on Housing

Re: Written Testimony Regarding SB 336, SB 337

From: Kevin S. Nelson
Executive Director
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I am writing in support of the SB 336 and SB 337 regarding mixed populations in public housing.

Let me give you the end of the story first and that is, simply, no matter what you read or hear from anybody on this matter, if you do not cap the number of non-elderly disabled in state elderly housing, then in years to come you will simply have no elderly housing.

Public Housing Authorities, for many years, have testified and advocated for a cap on the number of non-elderly disabled in public housing for several very good reasons.

When the state elderly wait lists open up, groups representing the non-elderly disabled come in with batches of applications as there is little place else for their clients to go. It appears that public housing has been designated to shoulder the responsibility of housing the non-elderly alone.

This situation is exacerbated for those housing authorities, like Stratford, who have an allowable cap in their federal programs. Once that cap has been reached, which it has for some time for Stratford, then all non-elderly go to the state elderly programs which will result in eventual saturation.

The non-elderly disabled currently occupy 37% of Stratford's state elderly. The non-elderly disabled pay, on average, \$76.00 per month or \$912 per year, less rent than the average elderly. This represents a current loss of \$37, 392.00 per year for the Authority.

In short, the Authority loses almost \$1,000.00 per year for every non-elderly tenant admitted to state housing.

If the State is not going to subsidize the difference between non-elderly and elderly rents, then the State elderly developments will continue to lose money as the non-elderly population eventually saturates the developments. This will cause the Authority to raise rents to make up for the difference in order to sustain and maintain the developments, with the rent burden eventually become unaffordable for both elderly and non-elderly.

Other considerations are as follows:

A reasonable cap on the non-elderly disabled will allow the Authority to continue to preserve the elderly nature of the development while still accommodating a percentage of the non-elderly population. Public Housing cannot, and should not have to, shoulder the responsibility of housing the non-elderly alone. It is doing its part already but cannot be the only resource.

The non-elderly live different life styles which often cause conflict in the elderly developments and put the residents at odds with each other.

The non-elderly population continues to rise so something has to be done now to preserve this resource.

As the non-elderly population increases in a development, the number of elderly applications decline when wait lists are open.

The federal government has realized this and so has the State of Massachusetts. It is time Connecticut put a preservation mechanism in place. I believe a cap of between 10 and 14 percent would be acceptable.

Respectfully submitted.