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**Testimony of
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Submitted to Housing Committee
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**SENATE BILLS 336 & 337 AN ACT ESTABLISHING GOALS FOR MIXED
POPULATION PUBLIC HOUSING**

SUPPORT

Conn-NAHRO is the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, the Connecticut Chapter represents over 112 Connecticut housing authorities and other non-profit and community development member agencies. Member agencies have the responsibility of effectively managing or administering housing for 150,000 families/individuals and over 62,000 housing units in Connecticut.

Speaking on behalf of Conn-NAHRO's Executive Board and member agencies, I would like to express our strong support for S.B. 336 & S.B. 337 which would establish limits on non-elderly disabled tenants in State of Connecticut financed elderly low income housing.

The current policy creates a number of complicated problems. Continuing the current practice is an unacceptable solution, if we wish to be able to continue to provide a low income housing solution to our seniors and young disabled residents. The main problems include reduction of units available for elderly, the financial strain and resident relations.

The first of the main problems is the reduction and ultimately in some cases elimination of available housing units for seniors over time. Presently, the number of young disabled residing in the state financed elderly properties or on the waiting lists for these properties have grown to be almost 32% of the population/applicants¹. As a basis of comparison in 2007 young disabled made up 26.5% of the elderly housing population². Additionally, in 2001 Conn-NAHRO surveyed its membership and the membership reported that young disabled made up 16% of its elderly housing population.

¹ CHFA 2012 TPS Report

² CHFA 2007 TPS Report

Once a low income housing unit is occupied by a young disabled resident, they typically occupy the apartment for many more years than their elderly counterparts do. The percentage of young disabled is growing in the elderly housing properties and eventually will squeeze out the elderly; this legislation will prevent this.

The next significant issue is the financial strain created with this shift away from elderly housing and towards young disabled housing. The annual income for a young disabled resident is typically based on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSI), which is substantially less than the average income of an elderly resident. This is a major factor because the only income for the state financed elderly housing properties is derived from the rents it collects. Since rents are based on household income, the rent collected from a young disabled resident is substantially less than that of an elderly resident.

Therefore, as the number of young disabled households increases in an elderly low income housing property, the properties will be unable to generate enough income to sustain its operating and capital needs. This very issue is in conflict with the focus of State's \$300 million pledge for the state housing portfolio to renovate state financed properties and create sustainable operations for the future. The rental stream of a property that cannot sustain its' future operating and capital needs would only squander the current State investment and require a significant additional investment form the State on a reoccurring basis.

Finally, a delicate and challenging issue that is most important to our residents, both elderly and young disabled. This is the fact that the life styles and behavior patterns of elderly and non-elderly residents are often not compatible. This leads to excessive staff time being committed to managing resident concerns or disputes. While the State does fund a Resident Service Coordinator for many of the elderly properties, as the population of young disabled grows within the properties the funding available does not even begin to fund the number of hours required. The lack of supportive services for the non-elderly disabled is felt by all residing in state financed elderly housing creating an unstable environment for the young disabled and their elderly neighbors.

In conclusion, Conn-NAHRO supports legislation that would create a cap on non-elderly disabled residents in State of Connecticut financed elderly housing. The goal of such legislation would be to help produce a sustainable housing model, with a population balance that is manageable and preserves units for the growing elderly population while still mangling to provide housing to the young disabled as well. We urge the members of the committee to support SB 336 and SB 337.