



National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials
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Testimony provided to the Housing Committee

RE: SB 337 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING GOALS FOR MIXED POPULATION PUBLIC HOUSING (AND SIMILAR BILL SB 336)
AND
AN ACT CONCERNING THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING (AND SIMILAR BILL SB 24)

Submitted by Cathy Branch Stebbins

Good Afternoon Chairmen and to the members of the Housing Committee, my name is Cathy Branch Stebbins and I am the executive director for CONN-NAHRO, the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials, also known as Connecticut's membership association for public housing authorities. Over 130 housing authorities in Connecticut are members and along with our affiliate organizations, CONN-NAHRO provides outreach to over 400 individuals. Member agencies have the responsibility of effectively managing or administering housing for 150,000 families/individuals and over 62,000 housing units in Connecticut.

I am here in support of two bills before you:

First, please advance Proposed Bill 338, AN ACT THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING introduced by Senator Chapin.

The "Report of the Interagency Council on Affordable Housing" was provided the legislature on January 15, 2013. The report makes the recommendation to add CONN-NAHRO to the membership of the Council. We strongly support this recommendation and CONN-NAHRO has been in attendance at every meeting of the Interagency Council since it began meeting. CONN-NAHRO also urges the legislature to further expand the membership to include representation from other key stakeholders including developers and investors.

We feel this bill corrects an oversight in the original composition of the Interagency Council on Affordable Housing to include membership from housing authorities, developers of housing, realtors and property managers. I believe this bill will have broad support from members of the Legislature and I hope you will pass it.

Second, our membership strongly supports Senate Bill 337, AN ACT ESTABLISHING GOALS FOR MIXED POPULATION PUBLIC HOUSING sponsored by Senator John Kessel and similar legislation, SB 336 sponsored by Senator Kelly.

This proposed legislation would put a limit on the number of non-elderly tenants in state-sponsored elderly housing to 14% of the total population on a project-by-project basis. Fourteen percent is the limit that the State of Massachusetts has adopted for their similar, state-sponsored elderly housing projects.

Connecticut's housing authorities feel the obligation to alert you that something must be done if we want to preserve this affordable housing for persons over age 62.

If we don't put a cap on non-elderly tenants residing in state-sponsored elderly housing, we are going to lose all of our state elderly housing. I don't think this was the intended consequence of the original legislation.

We can see this loss of elderly housing happening now. The Connecticut Housing Finance Authority TPS report shows the following changes in non-elderly disabled in senior living between 2007 and 2012:

- Branford's Parkside Village went from 36% disabled to over 50% disabled residents.
- Bristol's Mt. Laurel Manor went from 37% to over 60% disabled.
- East Windsor's Park Hill went 23% disabled to over 40% disabled.
- Middlefield's Sugarloaf Terrace went from no disabled to now 60% disabled.
- Marino Manor in Middletown went from 10% to now almost 60% disabled.
- Simsbury's Murphy Apartments are now 90% disabled.
- Suffield's Broder Place is now 63% disabled.
- Stern Village in Trumbull is now 58% disabled.
- Greenwood Manor in Voluntown is now 100% disabled.
- Wethersfield's Adams Apartments is now 70% disabled.

Please note that the State of Connecticut provides no operating subsidy to help a housing authority to manage and sustain this housing. The housing remains affordable based on rents that a mix of incomes provides. When you place too many tenants into public housing that have no income or very low disability incomes, there is not enough operating support to sustain the affordability of the housing.

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

To further complicate things, in many cases, the disabled persons are sometimes young adults with severe mental health and addiction disabilities. I call your attention to the written testimony of Sue Shontell, the executive director of the New London Housing Authority. Her testimony provides you with 4 pages of compelling evidence that these two populations do not mix well and offers some

examples of the issues that they have or are dealing with regarding mentally ill and substance abusing disabled tenants in senior housing. Sue's testimony shows the volume of the problem and shows it sometimes takes a year to resolve the issues and for the other residents to feel safe again.

CONN-NAHRO's member housing authorities feel that they have a responsibility to alert you that we will lose our state sponsored elderly housing if action is not taken now.

Something must be done if we want to preserve this affordable housing for persons over age 62.

Placing a limit on the number of non-elderly residing in elderly housing to 14% is a reasonable mix of populations for this type of housing. I urge your support of SB 337 or SB 336.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Branch Stebbins

