



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

Testimony

Before the Committee on Housing

Tuesday, February 19, 2013

Anne Foley, Chair  
Interagency Council on Affordable Housing

Good morning, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Butler, Senator McKinney, Representative Miller, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee. I am Anne Foley, Under Secretary at the Office of Policy and Management, and I am here today in my capacity as Chair of the Interagency Council on Affordable Housing to testify on two bills that propose changes to the membership of the Council. The bills before your Committee today are S.B. No. 24 and S.B. No. 338, AN ACT CONCERNING THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

As you know, Public Act 12-1 of the June Special Session established a new Department of Housing as the lead agency for all matters related to housing. The department is responsible, at the state level, for all aspects of policy, development, redevelopment, preservation, maintenance and improvement of housing and neighborhoods. The department will also develop strategies to encourage the provision of housing in the state, including housing for very low, low, and moderate income families. The focus of the department is on housing, community development, redevelopment, and urban renewal.

The legislation also established an Interagency Council on Affordable Housing to advise and assist the Commissioner of the Department of Housing in the planning and implementation of the department. The Council brings together thirteen members with diverse experience as housing funders, administrators, providers, advocates, tenants and individuals seeking housing assistance. Council members represent: the Office of Policy and Management; the Departments of Social Services, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Children and Families, Correction, and Economic and Community

Development; the Partnership for Strong Communities; the Connecticut Housing Coalition; The Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness; the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority; two members who are tenants receiving state housing assistance; and one member who is a state resident eligible to receive state housing assistance.

Over the past six months, the committee worked very well together and on January 15, 2013, as required statutorily, the Council submitted a report to the Governor and the Appropriations, Housing and Human Services Committees, on the implementation of the Department of Housing. The report included several recommendations ranging from programs to be transferred to the Department of Housing and a timeline for implementation to effective changes to the state's housing delivery systems.

The Council also discussed and recommended changes to its membership going forward. The council's recommended changes are to add representation to its membership from the state Departments of Education and Developmental Services and from the Connecticut National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (Conn-NAHRO). These recommended changes are included in the Governor's *H.B. No. 6366, An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Department of Housing*, which is also before this committee, but not on the agenda today. Adding representation from the state Departments of Education and Developmental Services and Conn-NAHRO to the Council is an important step in enhancing coordination across housing services and will create a more inclusive, diversified Council with a deeper understanding of the many dimensions of the housing arena.

The bills before the Committee today would alter the composition of the Council to add certain stakeholders. S.B. No. 24 recommends adding representation from local housing authorities, developers, bankers and realtors, and S.B. 338 recommends adding representation from housing authorities, developers, for-profit and not-for-profit owners and management, mortgage lenders and realtors.

We agree that housing authorities ought to be represented on the Interagency Council on Affordable Housing and we think that this can best be accomplished by adding representation from Conn-NAHRO. Conn-NAHRO's membership consists of 106 Connecticut Housing Authorities and nonprofit members managing or administering housing for 150,000 families and individuals in over 62,000 housing units throughout Connecticut.

However, the Council intentionally refrained from making a recommendation to expand its membership to include developers, lenders, owners, or any other particular entity that could apply for state funds or may directly receive financial benefit from council decisions. The organizations currently represented on the council were selected to represent the broad interests of a particular stakeholder community rather than any specific entity's interest. The proposed additions in these two bills would inevitably represent a single entity's interest and could result in actual or apparent conflicts of interest and impair the integrity of the council. You should be aware that, in the context of the Council's deliberations to-date, we have sought the input of many of the private interests reflected in the proposed legislation and be assured that we will continue to do so as necessary. For these reasons, we oppose the addition of the members outlined in S.B. No. 24 and S.B. No. 338.

On behalf of the Interagency Council on Affordable Housing, I ask you to take no further action on SB 24 and SB 338, but rather to support the membership changes to the council contained in HB 6366 which include representation of housing authorities.

I would be happy to further discuss this issue with you today or at any time in the future. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you have.