

Legal Assistance Resource Center ❖ of Connecticut, Inc. ❖

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H.B. 6015 -- Fees for high incidence of 911 calls

Public Safety Committee public hearing -- February 7, 2012

Testimony of Raphael L. Podolsky

Recommended Committee action: SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE

This bill prohibits towns from imposing a fee for having dispatched emergency services to a site in response to a 911 telephone call. The bill appears to be a response to a recent New Britain "hot spot" ordinance that imposes a charge on building owners if there are an "excessive" number of times that police, fire, or other municipal officials are dispatched to the property for emergency services..

In general, we think that it is not a good idea to charge for 911 calls. While it is true that unnecessary calls can clog the response process by adding to the number of complaints requiring service, it is also true that the threat of fees may discourage use of 911. In addition, the number of 911 calls is not a reliable measure of assessing fault in building management. The point of an easily accessible system like 911 is to make it easy to use, and community policing ordinarily promotes resort to 911 by residents if they think that police or fire involvement may be needed. The use of 911 fees to target "hot spots" is contrary to this approach and may in the end discourage such calls. There are other ways – e.g., use of the nuisance abatement laws – by which "hot spot" properties can be targeted for strong enforcement.