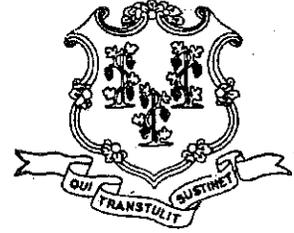


DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION



Testimony of William M. Rubenstein
Commissioner of Consumer Protection

Public Safety and Security Committee Public Hearing
February 21, 2013

Governor's Bill HB 6374 "An Act Concerning Coordinated Long-Term Disaster Relief and Recovery"

Sen. Hartley, Rep. Dargan, Sen. Guglielmo, Rep. Giegler and honorable members of the Public Safety and Security Committee. I am William M. Rubenstein, Commissioner of Consumer Protection. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of Governor Malloy's proposal HB 6374, "An Act Concerning Coordinated Long-Term Disaster Relief and Recovery."

This bill would establish the Connecticut Coordinated Assistance and Recovery Endowment Fund, to be known as the CT CARE fund. The fund is proposed for the purpose of accepting and administering donations from private sources to assist in meeting the financial needs of individuals or communities that have experienced disasters from which they are recovering and where other sources of financial support, such as federal and state monies, are not adequate.

Under this proposal, the fund would be administered by a governing board of individuals that have expertise in administering such funds, or possess other skills such as in the area of non-profit corporations, public safety, emergency services, and victim advocacy. Additionally, state agencies with expertise in key areas will also serve the governing body in an advisory capacity. Among those advisory agencies is the Department of Consumer Protection.

As you are aware, the Department of Consumer Protection has oversight of public charities. This proposal responds to a pressing need that is apparent after every disaster and tragedy and has come into sharp focus again most recently in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Sandy and the Sandy Hook elementary school shootings. Connecticut citizens, and indeed citizens throughout the country, have an overwhelming desire to help. The way that most are able to help is to provide money to supplement the resources that otherwise would be available. What we know, however, is that many of these donors are looking for organizations that they can be assured will use the money for its intended purpose. After each disaster, the Department of Consumer Protection advises donors on how to be wise donors and evaluate how an organization might spend their money. We consistently counsel donors to look for well-known funds that have clear missions dedicated to disaster assistance, that have a capable leadership structure and that use best practices for distributing funds for their intended purpose. Where that information is not fully transparent, dollars contributed could be lost to less than trustworthy organizations, or even blatant scam artists; or dollars could simply fail to be contributed at all by wary donors.

The CT CARE Fund is designed to be one of the funds that donors can turn to and be safe and secure that there are adequate safeguards and protocols in place to assure that donations are spent to address, in a targeted way, the very disaster or tragedy that prompted the generous and compassionate donations. The creation of the CT CARE fund can be seen as a win-win situation. Donors would feel comfortable knowing that their dollars are going to a statutorily defined fund with a dedicated mission and strong leadership; and the administration of those dollars by the governing board would get the proceeds from the fund to those in need as expeditiously as possible.

I am honored to add my testimony in support of this very important proposal and ask for your support of the bill.