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**American Red Cross**  
**Statement to the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Security**  
**of the Connecticut General Assembly in Support of HB 6160**  
***An Act Requiring Working Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors in All Residential Buildings and Private Dwellings at the Time Title is Transferred***

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To the Chairs and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **HB 6160, An Act Requiring Working Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors in All Residential Buildings and Private Dwellings at the Time Title is Transferred**. The American Red Cross is committed to increasing household safety and readiness. This legislation would help that cause.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless and tasteless gas, and the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CO poisoning claims more than 400 lives a year, and sends more than 20,000 to the emergency room.

Carbon monoxide is a by-product of incomplete combustion. Potential sources include common gas-burning appliances such as a furnace, water heater, stove, oven or grill, as well as other fuel-burning devices like fireplaces, engines and generators. If such devices are improperly installed or used or malfunction, carbon monoxide can build up inside a dwelling, leading to illness or even death. Nearly every home in Connecticut – roughly 85% according to US Census data – uses some form of fossil-fuel based heating.

Because you can't see, smell or taste carbon monoxide, you may not even realize that you are being poisoned. Initial symptoms mimic the flu, and include headache and nausea. The **ONLY** safe way to detect this deadly gas is with a working carbon monoxide alarm.

Connecticut's legislature recognized the dangers of CO and in 2005 required CO alarms be installed in all newly constructed homes. Today, 36 states have similar laws, over half of which also require CO alarms retroactively in existing homes.

Connecticut has seen many CO poisoning deaths and hundreds of people treated for CO poisoning as a result of Tropical Storm Irene and the October snow storm in 2012 and because of the recent blizzard in 2013. Last year's storms caused massive power outages that led many of these CO victims to improperly use generators, charcoal grills and other fuel burning appliances to stay warm, cook food or power appliances. The blizzard of 2013 brought CO hazards caused by high and drifting snow blocking combustion venting and intake systems. While these storms have highlighted the issue, carbon monoxide poisoning is a year round problem, but these incidents can be prevented.

CO poisoning stories are reported on a regular basis. We know that CO alarms save lives. We support HB 6160 and urge its passage to promote the safety of Connecticut residents. HB 6160 will help ensure that smoke and CO alarms, where required, are present and properly installed in homes available for sale.

Thank you for allowing the Red Cross to register its support of this lifesaving legislation.