



Date: February 14, 2013

To: Hon. Danté Bartolomeo, Co-Chair  
Hon. Larry B. Butler, Co-Chair  
Members of the Housing Committee

Testimony of Betsy Crum,  
Executive Director, Connecticut Housing Coalition

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Butler and members of the Housing Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is Betsy Crum, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Housing Coalition. The Connecticut Housing Coalition represents the broad, vibrant network of community-based affordable housing activity across the state. Our more than 250 member organizations include nonprofit developers, human service agencies, resident associations, and diverse other housing practitioners and advocates. Founded in 1981, the Coalition works to expand housing opportunity and to increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing in Connecticut.

I am submitting testimony on two bills before you today, **HB 6366: An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Department of Housing** and **HB 6421: An Act Concerning Public Housing Grievance Procedures**.

The Housing Coalition supports **HB 6366: An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Department of Housing**. It has been my honor and pleasure to have participated as a member of the Interagency Council on Affordable Housing over the past six months, and to have represented our broad membership on that committee. The new Department of Housing approved during 2012 and implemented in H.B. 6366, An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Department of Housing, will provide leadership and vision around housing, and will coordinate the implementation and leveraging of the significant resources committed by the Governor and General Assembly. The new Department's mission – to "provide centralized leadership and a comprehensive approach to eliminating homelessness and meeting the needs of low- and moderate-income individuals, families and communities in Connecticut for quality and sustainable housing by enhancing the supply of, and access to, safe and affordable housing and by collaborating with other agencies to improve the infrastructure of neighborhoods and communities" - is spot-on. This new Department will:

- Consolidate State housing programs: The systems for funding housing and community development have been fragmented and bureaucratic for many years. The programs that will be transferred into the new Department demonstrate a thoughtful, important step toward better coordination and investment of resources. Consolidating housing production, operating and financing will enhance productivity, maximize leveraging and ensure a more comprehensive approach to meeting housing goals.
- Change the State's housing delivery system: The new Department will put in place policies that transform our housing delivery system to focus on comprehensive solutions and outcomes, bringing together all available resources to solve housing needs in Connecticut. It also has the potential to be a true "one-stop" for housing resources in the state. Housing providers and consumers would have access to funding from the various resource "pots" rather than chasing after isolated programs. The new Department of Housing can truly transform the way housing is accomplished in Connecticut.

I would like to express my strong support for the creation of this Department and the transfer of programs and related funding to it.

The Housing Coalition also supports **HB 6421: An Act Concerning Public Housing Grievance Procedures** but we recommend strengthening the language to ensure that Connecticut's public-housing residents will finally see uniform grievance procedure regulations.

It is twenty-five years since the original legislation was adopted by the Legislature requiring the Commissioner of the Department of Housing (later the Department of Economic and Community Development – DECD) to implement these regulations. Two years ago, a legislative proposal was raised to require DECD to finalize procedures, but the bill was not adopted. DECD stated at that time that it was close to completing the process, and we worked with them collaboratively over the past many months to draft procedures.

As of today, the state has not completed its adoption of the procedures referenced in HB 6421. Therefore, **we respectfully request that the language of HB 6421 be amended to require that regulations be adopted by no later than February 1, 2014.**

Thank you.