

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

RONALD McDANIEL

MAYOR OF MONTVILLE, CT

ON

S.B. No. 178 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SENIOR SAFETY ZONES

Dear Senator Ayala, Representative Serra and Distinguished Members of the Aging Committee,

Thank you for your leadership in raising Senate Bill 178 "An Act Concerning Senior Safety Zones". In our Town of Montville, the Town Council proposed a similar ordinance at the urging of our senior population who felt that they needed additional protections against sexual predators.

The Town Council approved the ordinance on October 10, 2012, after working closely with one of the staunchest advocates for seniors, your former colleague Senator Edith Prague, as well as our Senior Services Director and our Commission on Aging. Due to some technical issues with the ordinance, it was revisited and amended on December 10, 2012. Sen. Prague spoke at length at the public hearing that evening, as well as other senior leaders in the community who wished to have this ordinance in place. The amended ordinance passed that evening.

Subsequently, a member of the Town Council opposed to the ordinance petitioned for its repeal. The requisite number of signatures was obtained and the Council took up the issue of repeal on January 14, 2013. The debate centered on the statements made by Andrew Schneider of the Connecticut chapter of the ACLU that they would seriously consider taking on the case if a plaintiff approached them for representation as this would constitute an "unconstitutional punishment of banishment". The ACLU also took exception to the Town's belief that seniors are the target of sex crimes.

As a town that has had its share of unnecessary litigation, the Council voted to repeal the ordinance and continue to pursue a State policy that will, in fact, protect our seniors. Our ordinance had notification procedures to registered offenders so that there would not be a question of who was being barred from certain areas. Let me add here that we have a similar ordinance in place for the protection of our youth, yet despite the same call from the ACLU for its repeal, the detractors of the Senior Safety Zones did not petition for its repeal.

I believe that as leaders of our towns and of our State, it is incumbent upon us to protect all of our vulnerable citizens. Please consider this measure worthy of your support and passage as a mechanism to keep sexual offenders away from areas where seniors congregate and wish to feel safe. I consider this action to be a natural extension to the Child Safety Zones enacted in many municipalities.

Thank you for your time today and I wish you success in dealing with the multitude of issues facing you this session.