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**Testimony for Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
February 11, 2014 Hearing on Conservation and Development
By Lisa Tepper Bates, Executive Director
Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH)**

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak before you this evening.

As Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, I am honored to represent the voice of more than 75 non-profit providers of services to Connecticut residents experiencing homelessness that work every day in partnership with agencies of Connecticut state government, including the Departments of Housing. Every year, Connecticut's emergency shelters provide services to over 14,000 people. 1 in 5 of those in emergency shelter in Connecticut is a child. I am here tonight to provide our views regarding the housing and homelessness items in the Governor's proposed budget.

Ending homelessness in Connecticut is not only the **right** thing to do – it is the **smart** thing to do as a matter of public policy.

CCEH applauds the Governor's proposal to provide \$1 million for RAP certificates and \$650,000 for rapid rehousing initiatives. Many of our neighbors fall into homelessness, or cannot exit homelessness, simply due to the high cost of housing in Connecticut – the 6th most expensive state in America in terms of housing costs. The additional RAP certificates move the ball forward in providing more opportunity for our lowest income residents to secure housing at rates they can afford. This commitment of rapid re-housing assistance will help providers across the state move families with children, in particular, from homelessness to housing as quickly as possible. Targeted

assistance for security deposit, first month's rent, and like costs will be funded from carry-forward dollars, not from new appropriations.

CCEH applauds the Governor's proposal to provide 110 New Units of Scattered Site Supportive Housing. A central focus of efforts to end homelessness across the nation and in Connecticut is the goal of ending chronic homelessness, among those who have been homeless for long periods of time, in our shelters, on our streets, or in the woods, and who have disabling conditions. We know that the best, most effective way to assist those who are chronically homeless is through supportive housing, which offers a housing subsidy and support services.

CCEH supports the Governor's effort to fund two positions in the Department of Housing (DOH) to provide individualized technical assistance to housing authorities so they may develop and enhance their ability to address housing needs in their communities. Public housing resources across the state are an important part of our network of housing opportunities for low income residents: we must do more to take care of this infrastructure and to strengthen the communities within those walls through investment in maintenance and improvements.

CCEH is proud to support the additional assistance to homeless veterans and their families provided under the Governor's budget. The proposed budget provides **\$50,000 to increase the availability of security deposit assistance for homeless veterans.** At the same time, the proposed budget provides **\$500,000 for additional veteran housing at Rocky Hill, and makes available \$300,000 to provide supportive services for 74 units of veteran housing at Victory Gardens.** Ending homelessness for the brave men and women who have served our country in times of war and conflict – is a national priority.

These additional resources will help move us toward the goal of ending homelessness among veterans and their families in our state once and for all.

By advancing these proposals, Governor Malloy helps to move Connecticut in the direction of resolving the important problem of homelessness. There is more work ahead of us to end homelessness in Connecticut – as we can and must do. Non-profit providers – the backbone of services to the homeless in our state – are working to come together as teams in our communities so that we can serve as many of our neighbors in need, as effectively and efficiently as possible. This effort is important, but does not mean that we will not need additional resources to finish the job of ending homelessness. We are likely to require not a one-time, but a standing state commitment to provide resources for rapid re-housing. We know, in the future, we will need additional units of permanent supportive housing. And we know there is a great task ahead of Connecticut to fill the 90,000 unit gap of housing units available for those earning less than 30% of Area Median Income. Important challenges remain ahead, but with the Governor's 2015 budget proposal, we are on the right path.

Thank you.

