



**helping homeless people,
help themselves**

In Support of SB 29, AN ACT AUTHORIZING AND ADJUSTING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS, TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER PURPOSES.

Christina Inferrera, Service Coordinator, South Park Inn, Inc. and Vice-Chair of North Central Regional Mental Health Board

Senator Fonfara, Representative Widlitz, and distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee, my name is Christina Inferrera, Service Coordinator for South Park Inn Emergency Shelter in Hartford, as well as the Vice-Chair of the North Central Regional Mental Health Board.

I am here to support S.B. 29, an act authorizing and adjusting bonds of the State for capital improvements, transportation and other purposes. This proposal increases the funding available for private non-profit agencies, which have been flat funded for over fifteen years.

In this challenging recession, money for our agency and similar non-profits has been increasingly difficult to come by, while demand for services remains high. Facilities such as South Park Inn Emergency Shelter run at full capacity, with very limited financial support from our state. For example, during this winter of the "polar vortex", one of the coldest seasons on record, our Governor Malloy called upon shelters to take in any and all individuals that may have been exposed to these extreme weather conditions. South Park Inn, along with many other local shelters, ran significantly over capacity in order to meet this demand.

Just last year, the State of Massachusetts spent over \$60 million in placing homeless families in temporary motel settings. Just imagine what Connecticut shelters would be able to do with additional funding as proposed by S.B. 29. At South Park Inn we provide a multitude of services to assist individuals and families as they transition out of homelessness and into self-sufficient housing.

Referrals to our shelter come from many state agencies such as DSS, DMHAS, DCF, and area hospitals. Despite their large budgets and vast resources, these agencies turn to non-profits like South Park Inn to fill in the gaps and meet the needs of their clients and patients. (In light of the events that transpired at Sandy Hook), the State of Connecticut has begun to prioritize more funding for Mental Health Services. Shelters have been overlooked in this assessment, while the reality is that we are one of the first points of contact for individuals suffering from mental health conditions that find themselves experiencing homelessness. In 2013, over 37% of all persons that stayed at South Park Inn reported that they had been diagnosed with some type of mental illness. Collaborative interventions by South Park Inn and local psychiatric providers have ensured that these individuals received appropriate treatment, ongoing support, and achieved greater stability and well-being as members of our community.

I urge the Committee to support this proposal, and invest in the non-profit agencies that provide much needed services to the citizens of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and for your careful consideration of this matter.

Street Outreach ■ Emergency Shelter ■ Transitional Living ■ Supportive Housing

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