



Evonne M. Klein
Commissioner

Department of Housing

Connecticut
still revolutionary

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSING COMMITTEE 3/4/2014

Evonne Klein, Commissioner
Department of Housing

Good morning Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Butler and members of the committee. My name is Evonne Klein and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Housing (DOH). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you regarding several bills that impact DOH.

DOH supports Senate Bill 363, a part of DOH's legislative package, - AN ACT TRANSFERRING FUNDS DEPOSITED IN THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACCOUNT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING.

In 2005, the state legislature established the Community Investment Account (CIA) to fund affordable housing development and farmland, open spaces, and historic preservation. CIA is comprised of recording fees collected for all documents entered into municipal land records and is distributed amongst the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA), the Department of Economic and Community Development, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Department of Agriculture. Every three months, CHFA receives twenty-five percent of the account to supplement new or existing affordable housing programs, which totals approximately \$4 million annually.

Senate Bill 363 directs CHFA's portion of the CIA funding to DOH. As the new lead agency on housing, DOH is uniquely qualified to make policy decisions regarding how best to allocate this affordable housing funding. CIA funds will provide DOH with much needed flexible funding that can supplement existing successful programs or innovative new ones, fill small gaps in project funding in between competitive funding rounds, and finance any new program or project the department may wish to develop to reach its affordable housing goals.

However, DOH opposes the addition of language that annually directs one hundred fifty thousand dollars to "supplement technical assistance for resident participation and foster the development of independent, resident-led organizations in public housing communities." While the department supports the cultivation of resident participation, we disagree with a specific set-aside that limits DOH's flexibility in determining how best to utilize the CIA funding. If this bill moves forward with a set-aside, we respectfully request that Co-Chairs amend the language to state "Up to one hundred fifty thousand dollars annually..." During a time of continued fiscal constraints, it is important for agencies to constantly reassess priorities, ensuring limited resources are utilized towards the greatest benefit.

DOH fully supports Senate Bill 364, a part of DOH's legislative package, - AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVISIONS TO THE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING INITIATIVE STATUTE.

Section 17a-485c of the general statutes requires DOH and other agencies as well as CHFA and the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch to collaborate on establishing permanent supportive housing initiatives to provide additional affordable housing units and support services for eligible individuals. Senate

Bill 364 adds the Departments of Developmental Services and Veterans' Affairs, new members of the State Interagency Committee on Supportive Housing, to the list of collaborating agencies and broadens the eligibility for supportive housing assistance. Permanent supportive housing is a vital resource that provides low-income individuals and families, who have serious, persistent issues such as a mental health or substance abuse disorder, with the tools and resources they need to face these challenges and improve their lives. By expanding the eligibility criteria, this bill provides the Interagency Committee on Supportive Housing with the flexibility to prioritize new populations for support as they deem necessary.

House Bills 5436 and 5437 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE MEDICAL RESPITE FOR THE HOMELESS and AN ACT CREATING INCENTIVES FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS TO LIVE IN URBAN AREAS

DOH does not currently have the funding, nor is this funding included in the Governor's budget proposal, to support the two programs that would be created by House Bills 5436 and 5437. For these reasons, DOH cannot support these bills.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.