



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION



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Alok Bhatt

Dear Chairwoman Bartolomeo, Chairman Butler, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Alok Bhatt. I serve as Legislative Analyst for the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC/the Commission). APAAC is a nonpartisan entity created by the Connecticut General Assembly in 2008, to engage and advocate for our state's Asian Pacific American (APA) population.

In assisting some of our most disadvantaged community members, APAAC strongly supports HB-5438: An Act Concerning the Responsibilities of Landlords and Tenants Regarding the Treatment of Bedbug Infestations.

Many of our APA community members cite bedbugs as just one persistent problem within poor housing conditions. Bedbugs feed on the blood of other life forms, causing rashes and other irritations on peoples' skin. They embed themselves into furniture, carpets, and clothes, often requiring total fumigation of a dwelling. This makes treatment itself a highly disruptive process for families. Additionally, health risks associated with over-the-counter pesticides makes bedbug treatment too dangerous for regular tenants to perform.

Members of the Karen community, originating from Southeast Burma and concentrated in Hartford's Asylum Hill neighborhood, report neglect in response to notice of bedbug infestation. This lack of due diligence is unacceptable; we must establish actionable responsibilities and accountability.

The Commission believes landlords, with the cooperation of tenants and qualified treatment agents, must take affirmative steps to address infestations. The language of HB-5438 fairly distributes responsibilities and protects rights between landlords and tenants.

For the reasons above, APAAC stands behind HB-5438. This policy would greatly assist our APA community members, many of whom suffer bedbug infestations without any assistance from their landlords.

We thank you for your consideration.

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Sincerely,

Alok Bhatt

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