



State of Connecticut

African-American Affairs Commission

State Capitol

210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509

Hartford, CT 06106

860-240-8555

Dear Senator Winfield, Representative Butler, Senator Osten, Representative Rose, Senator Hwang and Representative Kupchick and other members of the housing committee.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify in front of your today. My name is Subira Gordon and I am the legislative analyst for the African American Affairs Commission. The mission of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) is to improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut. Today I would like to thank you for giving HB 6138 AAC mobility counselling for subsidized housing and SB 408 AAC youth homelessness a public hearing.

The remnants of redlining are evident in our society today. Racial segregation in the major cities of Connecticut is at an all-time high and the majority of minorities are living in the cities which have very little economic opportunity, neighborhoods are crime ridden, the public schools are poor and there is lack of access to reliable public transportation. Housing subsidies are a very important part of helping families who are in poverty. We as a commission would like to see this program not only assist families who are in poverty but help to lift them out of poverty and one of the best ways to do so is through mobility counselling. Currently 92% of minority voucher holders are living in disproportionality minority areas and 85% of minorities are living in high poverty areas. These individuals need access to better housing and assistance in being educated about opportunity moves, assistance in making these moves and assistance after these moves are made. While some people may not be interested in moving to an unfamiliar area we believe that we need to give them all the information necessary and have them make a choice about where they would like to live. It is important to note that mobility counselling has been

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offered in the state since 2002 however the commission thinks that it is time that we revisit the program and make changes in order to make the counselling more comprehensive which will help more families move out of poverty and have access to better services for their families.

I would like to make some suggestions to the bill that I think will be important in the current fiscal situation that we are facing. The state does already have a program so although it would be ideal to have more money go into the program to make it more comprehensive we do understand that this may be impossible given the financial climate. We are asking that this piece legislation examine the current program and makes changes to include school quality, crime rates and access to economic opportunity all of which can be found through opportunity mapping. A great example of opportunity mapping is provided through the Open Communities Alliance. We are also asking that this bill includes a reporting requirement for housing subsidies so that policy makers are able to see where housing subsidy dollars are being spent and evaluate if there are opportunity moves being made and if they are effective. It would be important to know if families stay in the higher opportunity areas or move back to their old neighborhoods after a few years. I am happy to speak with any of you individually about this issue and provide more information if necessary.

Next I would like to support SB 408 AAC Youth Homelessness. The Commission is in full support of taking a comprehensive look at youth homelessness and supports a plan to ameliorate this problem. I do want to caution having a specific focus though as minority youth are also affected by homelessness at a very high rate.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today,

Sincerely,

Subira Gordon
Legislative Analyst
African American Affairs Commission