



State of Connecticut
DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

TESTIMONY OF THE DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

IN SUPPORT OF:

H.B. No. 6759 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LANDLORDS AND TENANTS REGARDING THE TREATMENT OF BED BUG INFESTATIONS

JOINT COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

February 17, 2015

The Division of Criminal Justice respectfully recommends the Committee's **Joint Favorable Report** for H.B. No. 6759, An Act Concerning the Rights and Responsibilities of Landlords and Tenants Regarding the Treatment of Bed Bug Infestations. Our testimony today mirrors that which we presented in 2012 when the General Assembly considered, but did not enact, essentially the same legislation.

The Division of Criminal Justice supports H.B. No. 6759. This bill adds components to existing landlord-tenant law that are necessary additional obligations or definitions of law, in order to allow for the prompt and safe elimination of a (properly identified) infestation of bed bugs. The Division of Criminal Justice handles prosecution of violations of the various health, housing, fire, building and zoning laws of the state and local governments. When a landlord fails to eliminate bed bugs, a tenant may complain to the municipal department of health or housing. After an inspection, the landlord is subject to an order from a director of health or other housing enforcement agency to abate the bed bugs in a tenant's unit. Failure to comply with that order can be referred to our office, and generally is referred to our Housing prosecution unit, for criminal prosecution as allowed at law.

H.B. No. 6759 allows both landlords and tenants to eliminate a bed bug infestation more quickly by providing a set of rules under which to operate in pursuit of their resolution of this very mutual problem. Most importantly, the bill puts time frames on compliance. Bed bugs must be addressed promptly. When it comes to landlords and tenants, this clarification is needed in order to allow them both a fair and effective notice and opportunity to remedy this pest before it spreads throughout a building. Bed bugs can spread quickly as they are mobile, particularly easy to transport, and can pass through unit walls if the adjacent units are untreated. Once the insects are in residence, to breed they only need a blood host (such as the human occupant). Getting rid of bed bugs is difficult. It involves particular steps in preparation by the tenant to succeed and often must be done by a certified operator, often with more than one application. Bed bug pest

control can be expensive and becomes more so with special problems such as untimely access. Inability to access for treatment of a unit or to properly treat a unit due to hardship or otherwise will result in a lack of abatement of that unit and a potential spread of the problem to innocent neighbors and beyond.

H.B. No. 6759 is supported also by the Connecticut Coalition Against Bed Bugs (CCABB), an ex-officio voluntary interdepartmental effort the Division of Criminal Justice has participated in since the coalition was established in 2009. CCABB was created to assist our state's residents and officials in responding to a quickly emerging serious bed bug (*Cimex lectularius*) resurgence. Each representative of the coalition was enlisted due to expertise and high volume involvement with this threat. The coalition consists of representatives from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station as our coalition leader and our "bug" experts, the Department of Public Health as our "health nuisance" enforcement officials, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection as our "pesticide and certified applicator" regulators and enforcement officials, the Department of Consumer Protection as our "mattress recycling" regulators and enforcement officials, the Division of Criminal Justice as our "prosecutorial" officials, a local Director of Health, and two private pest control business owners. CCABB has held routine meetings to share the current and needed information on bed bug abatement methods and problems with abatement, established list serves to get the information out as soon as possible, and has fielded literally hundreds of calls yearly from the public and enforcement officials on bed bug issues. It has also held repeated information training live and cable television forums free for the public and health enforcement communities in an effort to help our state thwart a bed bug pandemic. You may note the work and resource bank at <http://www.ct.gov/caes/cwp/view.asp?a=2826&q=437580&caesNav=|> Despite all this well-coordinated and long term outreach, Connecticut is losing the fight to eliminate bed bugs from invading our homes, schools and businesses.

H.B. No. 6759 sets a needed statutory framework within which a landlord and tenant can both fairly and completely respond to a bed bug infestation. Disclosure, timed inspection and treatment, apportionment of responsibility upon finding of unreasonable non-compliance and particularly the safety in requiring a certified operator are all defined as obligations in the bill and placed in a balanced way so that both landlord and tenant must cooperate or face penalty.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Division of Criminal Justice if you require additional information or have any questions regarding this issue.