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**Housing Committee - Public Hearing February 3, 2015**

**Proposed Bill No. 6144: AN ACT CONCERNING AGE RESTRICTED HOUSING OPTIONS FOR ELDERLY PERSONS**

**Proposed Bill No. 409: AN ACT CONCERNING AGE RESTRICTED HOUSING OPTIONS FOR ELDERLY PERSONS**

**Proposed Bill No. 6141: AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXPANSION OF AGE RESTRICTED HOUSING OPTIONS FOR ELDERLY PERSONS**

**Proposed Bill No. 170: AN ACT PROTECTING HOUSING FOR SENIOR CITIZENS**

**Written Testimony of Scott C. Bertrand**

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Housing Committee -

I have been a public housing practitioner for over 19 years. My experience includes being a Past President of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials more commonly known as CONN-NAHRO. I am currently the Executive Director of the Enfield Housing Authority.

First I would like to thank Representative Alexander, Senator Kissel, Representative Brycki, and Senator Markley for taking on this important issue and the Housing Committee for your time and consideration.

I fully support Proposed Numbers 6144, 409, 6141 and 170. Under the current conditions, the number of apartments available to seniors in the state financed elderly housing portfolio is decreasing at an alarming rate.

In Enfield, there are 200 elderly apartments owned and managed by the Enfield Housing Authority. However, 102 or 52% units are not rented by seniors but rather individuals under age 62 with disabilities. In 2002 the percentage was only 14.4%. If this trend continues there will be fewer and fewer apartments available to seniors when it is expected that there will be a steep increase in seniors driven by the aging baby boomer population. It should be noted that 6,000 supportive housing units have been created over the past decade.

A high concentration of people with disabilities also raises a concern that a potential unintended re-institutionalization is occurring. I am of the understanding that the State of Connecticut sought to do away with institutions decades ago.

The drastically increased number of nonelderly individuals with disabilities has had other impacts on what was once traditional senior housing. There is a lack of supportive services available to meet the needs of the younger population and

community based mental health providers do not have resources to offer on-site services. Housing authorities are primarily providers of housing and not financially equipped to be social service providers. Adding social services comes at a cost which at this time can only be covered by rent increases to all residents. Seniors and younger individuals have very different lifestyles which have led to conflicts.

The Federal government and the State of Massachusetts have long recognized the need to preserve units for seniors. Under Federally funded low income housing program guidelines, housing authorities may designate specific developments or parts of developments as senior only. Since 1995 the State of Massachusetts financed developments give a preference to seniors when the population of seniors drops below 86.5%.

It is important to note that we advocating for a preference for seniors and not to exclude younger individuals with disabilities. Flexibility could be built in where the apartments will be made available to the nonelderly with disabilities should there be no elderly on the waiting lists.

The need to preserve housing for the State's aging population is very real as the trend is being felt throughout the State of Connecticut. With consideration to the above, I urge the Housing Committee to support Proposed Bill Numbers 6144, 6141, 409, and 170.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott C. Bertrand