SEIU Healthcare. United for Quality Care
1199NE Connecticut

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Planning & Development Committee Public Hearing 2/13/2015

Jennifer Smith, Vice-President, District 1199/SEIU Healthcare
Testimony in OPPOSITION to:

- Proposed HB No. 5618 – Concerning Community-Based Residential Facilities
- Proposed HB No. 6483 – A Task Force to Study Group Home Distribution

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Miller and members of the Planning & Development Committee,

District 1199/SEIU Healthcare represents some 25,000 healthcare workers in Connecticut, including thousands of direct care workers in group homes run by the state and by private providers. We appreciate the opportunity to share our unique perspective and raise our concerns about *Proposed Bill No. 5618, An Act Concerning Community-Based Residential Facilities* and *Proposed Bill No. 6483 An Act Establishing A Task Force to Study Group Home Distribution.*

As public policy, our Union strongly supports the rights of people with mental health issues, developmental disabilities, or other health needs to have real choices about where they will live – including in what town or type of community.

While many tout the *concept* of "community-based services," history has shown that when an actual group home or other facility is proposed, many towns immediately resist (the Not-In-My-Back Yard, or NIMBY, effect). While some communities have been more than welcoming, others have been very effective in denying the placement of these homes – thereby drastically limiting consumers' geographic options.

This is why the delivery of group home services is a decision-process that should be made with a statewide perspective. We recognize that some may feel there is too-high a concentration of facilities in their town due to NIMBY-ism of other communities, but allowing one town to self-select out, even under the auspices of a "moratorium" as Bill No.5618 would do, could be the start of a slippery

slope that worsens the original problem. This could also raise serious legal issues for the State and municipalities due to HIPPA privacy, ADA, and other state and federal laws.

In addition, Proposed HB No. 5618, *An Act Concerning Community-Based Residential Facilities,* seems to single out "state-operated" group homes. Manchester is home to both state-run and private provider-run group homes. In our direct experience, state-run group homes have a higher level of staff training and lower level of staff turnover, both of which help to reduce the number of incidents that require contacting town officials and town expense. It is unclear why this bill specifically singles out "state-operated" group homes, and therefore is an additional reason why we oppose this bill.

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