

TESTIMONY TO THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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COO GUARDIAN AD LITEM SERVICES INC

This letter is written in opposition to amendments to Senate Bill No. 203 as proposed

Without benefit of the statutory history of the CGS section 8-3e1 which is targeted for amendment it is difficult to form a legal response to the letters in support of the proposed bill including that which was alarmingly set forth by the Town of New Milford.

The law as currently written does much to ensure that municipalities do not bend or twist their zoning laws in order to prevent the establishment of well-funded, well supported, maintained and governed operations housing our most vulnerable and at need populations including persons with mental illness. The letters in support of amendment speak loud and clear that this is a "Not In My Backyard" argument based upon little knowledge of the facility nor the individuals who work and reside there.

For a Municipality, that knew of and blessed the establishment of the Red Fox Road facility, to weigh in so vehemently after the fact is not only transparently disingenuous but it smacks of discrimination by that very municipality.

The residents of the Red Fox Road Facility should be considered residents of the Town of New Milford. Are they any less so?

A municipality and its constituents taking a position such as this demonstrates lack of sophistication and causes one pause to ponder the true reason behind it.

New Milford and its residents should be proud that, after a two year process, with which I was personally involved, a facility creating a permanent home for five men with mental illnesses was funded, using state resources on Red Fox Road. This program is one of a kind. The concept is progressive and forward thinking.

The law as currently stated allows maneuverability on the part of Municipalities to encourage the establishment of much needed resources for its most at need populations. To change that law, as proposed, would not only discourage care providers from attempting to acclimate individuals back to the community, it will all but make it impossible for them to ever find suitable housing alternatives in the State.

The intent of the legislature MUST be to protect against just such an atrocity and an affront to human dignity and the rights of all Connecticut citizens. Otherwise, New Milford and this committee are heading down a very slippery slope indeed.

