

Public Safety Committee
Public Hearing, February 19, 2015

Chairman Stephen Dargan, Chairman Tim Larson and members of the Public Safety Committee, my name is David Waskowicz. I reside at 169 Northfield Rd. Meriden, CT and I have held a Fire Protection License in this state for forty years. I am the chairman of the Fire Protection Sprinkler Systems Work Examining Board for the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection.

I am asking for your support of HB 6777, "An Act Requiring the Installation of Automatic Fire Extinguishing Systems in New Residential Buildings". This is an opportunity for the legislature to be proactive in preventing needless deaths to both civilians and firefighters in one and two family dwellings. This act would require automatic fire sprinkler systems to be installed in new construction. New homes are built with lightweight construction and the occupants of this type of construction and the first responders of the fire service would be afforded a better level of safety in the event of a fire with the installation of automatic fire sprinklers. The Connecticut legislature addressed fire sprinklers in nursing homes and passed legislation after the tragic loss of life in the Greenwood Nursing home fire. "Sprinklers Save Lives".

The advantage of fire sprinklers has been demonstrated by "side by side burns". A side-by-side burn is where two identical cubicles are constructed, one with an automatic sprinkler and one without. A fire is lit separately in each compartment. The cubicle without fire sprinklers "flashes over" in under five minutes, Flashover is where all contents ignite and chance of survival is not very likely. The cubicle with a fire sprinkler had activation of the sprinkler in under 40 seconds and nearly completely extinguished the fire. Chairman Dargan witnessed a demonstration of this on October 8, 2015 at the University of New Haven. This was the day after Hartford Firefighter Kevin Bell died in the line of duty fighting a house fire in that city.

There has been opposition to this legislation from the homebuilders. Some of the arguments are cost, aesthetics and water damage. The cost can be less than the granite countertops or carpeting, neither which will afford the occupants a chance of survival in the event there is a fire. With regard to aesthetics, sprinkler systems can be installed with no detracting from the décor. Lastly, the

water discharged from a single sprinkler is under 20 gallons per minute. One 2 ½" fire hose will deliver up to 250 gallons per minute, better than 10 times the amount of water from a single sprinkler head. When you factor in the time it takes to activate the sprinkler versus the fire department's response time, property damage and water damage is greatly diminished with the installation of automatic sprinklers. One more point is the "Hollywood" scenario. In the movies we see where an actor lights up a cigar or throws a match in the wastebasket and all the sprinkler heads discharge water. That is not true as only the sprinkler in close proximity of the fire discharges, not each and every one as the movies show. As I stated at the beginning of my testimony, it is time to enact legislation to stop the needless and senseless loss of life and injuries. It has to start somewhere. It should be implemented in newly constructed one and two family homes. Introduction of seat belts and airbags began with new cars. If those laws were not passed, how many car owners would choose those options?

The Public Safety Committee and the entire legislature has the ability to first and foremost save lives as well as prevent injury and reduce property damage by requiring automatic sprinkler systems in accordance with HB 6777 and that is why I ask for your support.

Thank you,

David J. Waskowicz