



February 18, 2015

Public Safety & Security Committee
Room 3600
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: H.B No. 6777 AN ACT REQUIRING THE INSTALLATION OF AUTOMATIC FIRE EXTINGUISHING SYSTEMS IN NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS.

Dear Committee Co-Chairs Dargan and Larson and Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee;

My name is Keith Flood, and I am the Fire Marshal for the West Haven Fire Department as well as the President of the Connecticut Fire Marshal's Association (CFMA) and Chair of the Connecticut Fire Sprinkler Coalition. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the CFMA and the CT Fire Sprinkler Coalition regarding House Bill No 6777: AN ACT REQUIRING THE INSTALLATION OF AUTOMATIC FIRE EXTINGUISHING SYSTEMS IN NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS.

I would first like to thank the Committee for entertaining a public hearing on such an important topic that not only affects the fire service as a whole but the residents of the State of Connecticut.

Both the CFMA and the CT Fire Sprinkler Coalition are in favor of adopting H.B 6777 for multiple reasons. Sprinklers located in one and two family homes will prevent firefighter deaths and injuries. On July 24, 2010, the City of Bridgeport lost two firefighters operating in a residential building and in October of 2014 Hartford lost one firefighter and another sustained burns operating in a residential building. If these buildings were sprinklered the outcome may have been different. **Now is the time for change.**

Residential sprinklers will also decrease fire fatalities in one and two family homes with the adoption of H.B 6777. Last year the State of Connecticut saw a 60% increase in residential fire deaths from 14 in 2013 to 23 in 2014 (numbers from OEDM). For example the West Haven Fire Department experienced a triple fatality fire in March of 2014 in a residential setting. If the building had been equipped with residential sprinklers, the outcome may have been quite different. **Now is the time for change.**

Smoke alarms are early warning devices that assist with alerting residents of a fire but smoke alarms in conjunction with residential sprinklers reduce the risk of dying in a fire by 80% versus 50% with smoke alarms alone. Sprinklers also reduce the amount of property damage by 70%, mostly because under most instances only one sprinkler activates 85 percent of the time. This is contrary to what is displayed in Hollywood. **Now is the time for change.**

The installation of residential sprinklers will lower insurance claims and keep residents in their homes after a fire. In the majority of cases, families are removed from their homes for up to or over one year after a fire. The relocation of fire victims creates undo stress and excessive insurance claims. For example, a residential sprinkler system in Derry, New Hampshire (Fire Engineering), not only saved the life of a 14 year old child but also saved the main portion of the home. The installation of residential sprinklers will create a better Connecticut. **Now is the time for change.**

The model safety code, the International Residential Code, is the current code in use for the construction of new one and two family homes. The State of Connecticut currently uses the 2009 version of the code and the sprinkler requirements were removed by the Codes and Standards Committee. The same requirements were again voted on and removed by the Codes and Standards Committee for the 2012 version of the IRC. The use of lightweight construction methods, which consist of trusses and engineered beams, are dependent upon the installation of residential sprinklers because of the inherent fire safety problems with the use of lightweight construction. If the sprinkler requirement is allowed to be removed from the model code in Connecticut then dimensional lumber should be the material used in the construction of one and two family homes in Connecticut. **Now is the time for change.**

The Connecticut Fire Sprinkler Coalition consists of stakeholders from various entities including Fire Marshals, Building Officials, The State Fire Marshal, Fire Chiefs, sprinkler and plumbing contractors, and housing prosecutors to name a few. Our focus is to educate people on the advantages of having a residential sprinkler system in their home. We recently conducted a side by side burn demonstration at the University of New Haven consisting of a sprinklered room and an unsprinklered room to emphasize the benefits of installing a residential fire sprinkler system. The demonstration can be seen on the NFPA website.

Is the cost of one life worth the cost of a residential sprinkler system? The cost is roughly equal to that of a granite counter top or wall to wall carpeting in a new home. Is that worth the life of even one resident? **Now is the time for change.**

The Public Safety Committee I speak before tonight has the ability to make a statement that will put Connecticut on the map and make us a SAFER state. **Now is the time** to adopt H.B 6777 and require residential fire sprinklers in all new one and two family homes in the State of Connecticut.

Respectfully,

Keith Flood, President
Connecticut Fire Marshal's Association