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Public Safety and Security Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 3600
300 Capital Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: S.B. 18: An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Hoarding

Dear Committee Chairmen Senator Timothy D. Larson and Rep. Stephen Dargan:

Thank you Senator Larson and Representative Dargan and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee for the opportunity to talk about the important issue of hoarding. This topic touches on so many key concerns that affect our citizens: public safety, mental health, quality of life, and educating and assisting people who might not recognize the issue. Because of this, I am here to strongly support this bill and its aim to establish a task force to study the public safety and health hazard of hoarding.

Hoarding is a real disorder in our communities,¹ and it impacts many lives – the individual, family members, neighbors, and the community at large. Every city and town in Connecticut can recall an incident or tragedy related to hoarding in its community.

Last year in Bridgeport, firefighters struggled to enter an apartment during a fire on Washington Avenue because of the sheer volume² of possessions stacked inside. During that tragedy, a 43-year-old mother died. In Cheshire, a woman suffocated after her house collapsed under the weight of the debris³ she had accumulated. And a few years ago in New Haven, the Police Department responded to a house on

¹Connecticut Post. "Hoarding is not just on TV, it's a real disease in our communities." January 2011. Hyperlink: <http://www.ctpost.com/news/article/Hoarding-is-not-just-on-TV-it-s-a-real-disease-976377.php>

² NBC Connecticut. "Bridgeport Mom Dies in Fire, Dad and Daughter Hurt." September 2014. Hyperlink: <http://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/Four-Hospitalized-2-year-old-Critical-After-Bridgeport-Fire-275056061.html>

³ New Haven Register. "Cheshire woman's death illustrates dangers of hoarding." June 2014. Hyperlink: <http://www.nhregister.com/health/20140621/cheshire-womans-death-illustrates-dangers-of-hoarding>

Girard Avenue following neighbor complaints and located more than 100 cats⁴ surviving in unlivable conditions inside the resident's small bungalow.

We need to better understand the warning signs related to hoarding in order to help people before the situation progresses beyond control.

A taskforce accomplishes exactly that, giving us the opportunity to think of better ways to prevent and treat this issue. This bill will help health inspectors, police officers and firefighters handle these situations, and it will help find more effective avenues for mental health professionals to assist people.

As the mayor of our state's largest city and a strong advocate for public safety and security, it is heartbreaking to see the damaging impact hoarding can have on a person, their health, their family and the public at large. Hoarding is said to affect up to 1 in 20 Americans and is a problem we have far too long ignored. The time to address it is now.

That's why I'm so supportive of passing this legislation at the state level in Connecticut. Seventy-five other jurisdictions in America have created a hoarding task force, and it's time we do the same. While we need to be respectful of individuals' rights of personal privacy, it's critical we tackle this issue before someone else is hurt.

If this legislation passes, I personally volunteer the time and energy of my staff, including the city of Bridgeport's Joint Inspections Committee, to help in the study. Let's create the safest state for our children and families to live in together.

I urge all members of the committee to pass this legislation. Thank you.

Best Regards,



Bill Finch
Mayor

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⁴ New Haven Register. "Experts try to understand reasons behind animal hoarding." July 2016. Hyperlink: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/3idvf6fr2e2d58b/girard1.docx?n=266991637>