



February 18, 2015

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

RE: H.B No. 18: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY HOARDING

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). I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the CFMA regarding House Bill No. 18: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY HOARDING.

Hoarding is identified as the action of collecting personal items in excess which puts themselves at risk as well as members of the public and first responders. I am speaking today in respect to the code enforcement community. The code enforcement community is made up of full time and part time personnel as well as volunteers in some communities consisting of Fire Marshals and Building Officials.

As a local code official, we respond to hoarding cases after a complaint has been made, a medical response call and also after a fire has occurred. Once the condition is identified the decision is made whether the occupant(s) can safely continue to live in the building. After the initial inspection has been completed the local code official can issue an abatement order to correct the accumulation of combustibles which is a condition that affects the egress from the building and fire safety. This is a lengthy process which many volunteer communities don't have the manpower to handle. The process takes many re-inspections and if access is not granted the code enforcement official has to apply for an administrative search warrant to conduct a re-inspection. The condition can eventually be corrected but the question is for how long? Without additional services and a solution to the problem the residents who suffer from this condition continue to collect even after the problem was originally corrected.

The relocation of the person that suffers from the hoarding condition is a significant problem. Some of the sufferers don't have the funds to relocate themselves which puts the burden on the local municipality.

The hoarding condition needs a multi-jurisdictional response and a plan of action to have an impact on the problem. Code enforcement alone can't correct the inherent problem of hoarding for the long term. The hoarding working group was established to review the problem and identify possible solutions to the problem.

The formulation of a legislative task force will help identify solutions to the societal problem of hoarding. I ask the Public Safety Committee to consider adopting H.B 18.

Respectfully,

Keith Flood, President
Connecticut Fire Marshal's Association