

CONNECTICUT LEGAL RIGHTS PROJECT, INC.

Kathleen M. Flaherty, Associate Executive Director
P. O. Box 351, Silver Street, Middletown, CT 06457
Telephone (860) 262-5033 • Fax (860) 262-5035
Email: kflaherty@clrp.org

Statement for Appropriations Committee Public Hearing March 2, 2015

REGARDING THE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED BIENNIAL BUDGET
Opposed to cuts in the DOH Budget for PILOT, tax abatement, and PHRN

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and other members of the Committee:

My name is Kathy Flaherty. I am the Associate Executive Director Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP), a legal services organization that advocates for low-income individuals in institutions and in the community who live with mental health conditions. We support initiatives that integrate individuals into the community, and we provide advocacy to ensure that their housing rights are protected.

The Governor's proposed budget for the Department of Housing will hurt our clients who live in state-funded housing. The elimination of funding for the PILOT (public housing payments in lieu of taxes) program and the non-profit housing tax abatement program will force tenants living in housing covered by these programs to pay higher rents. These tenants include people with disabilities, who are often living on a fixed income. Higher base rents will mean that the tenants with the least resources are bearing the entire burden of this rental increase.

The Governor's budget also eliminates funding for the Public Housing Residents Network (PHRN). We have a saying in the mental health advocacy community: "Nothing about us without us." PHRN empowers the residents of public housing to be involved in policy decisions that affect their lives and communities. Eliminating this funding would silence voices that must be heard, and is bad public policy.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns.