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State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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MEMBER
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TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Senator Holder-Winfield, Representative Butler, Senator Hwang, Representative Kupchick and members of the Housing Committee, I am here today to speak in favor of Proposed Bills 6142, 6143 and 6141.

Proposed Bill 6142: An Act Concerning Security Deposits for Age-Restricted Public Housing:

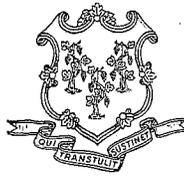
Under Connecticut statute Public Housing Authorities can only retain security deposits for one year. Most public housing residents remain a tenant beyond one year, and that is why many housing authorities do not even collect the initial deposit. These security deposits amount to a small sum of money, but allowing the housing authority to keep the deposit for the entire tenancy would reduce rental fees collectively for all residents in public housing communities. For example, in 2014 nine out of 14 Enfield Housing Authority tenants moved out owing an average of \$1,388 each for a total of \$12,495. The Enfield Housing Authority would have been able to recoup approximately \$2,500 if it was allowed to retain security deposits beyond one year. In turn, this \$2,500 would have gone back into improving the housing authority, and that would have helped keep rental fees lower for Enfield public housing residents. I personally visited an Enfield Housing Authority vacated premises last month, and I can personally attest to the amount of maintenance needed to make this one particular residence become habitable again. I sense that this same situation exists for municipal housing authorities throughout Connecticut, and I feel that Proposed Bill 6142 would address this issue.

Proposed Bill 6143: An Act Concerning A Centralized Wait-List for Age-Restricted Public Housing:

This bill mirrors Federal public housing wait-list requirements, and it would help streamline Connecticut wait-list requirements in order to strengthen Connecticut Public Housing.

Proposed Bill 6141: An Act Concerning The Expansion of Age-Restricted Housing Options For Elderly Persons:

This bill encompasses a difficult issue of most importance, and I hope that this committee and the General Assembly can work to improve the current situation. To be blunt, this legislature has talked about this growing problem for many years without any action. We have had a Program Review Study on this issue, and this committee has held numerous hearings on this issue without action. I worry that a serious public safety incident will soon develop if this legislature does not act.



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Enfield's public housing statistics shed light on this issue. In 2002 the percentage of individuals residing in age-restricted housing in Enfield who were under age 62 with disabilities was 14.4%. Today that figure in Enfield is 52%. Yes, over half of the residents in age-restricted public housing in Enfield are individuals under the age of 62 with disabilities. The wait-list for seniors in Enfield for age-restricted housing is growing exponentially, and with the Baby-Boomer Generation moving into retirement the current manner of business is unsustainable.

I sympathize with the significant burden placed upon the Department of Mental Health and Addictive Services, and I sympathize with those individuals with disabilities who are under 62 years old residing in age-restricted housing. In fact, I submitted this legislation specifically with those disabled individuals in mind. The move that Connecticut made to close down traditional mental institutions was the right thing to do. But now we have a situation where we are practically re-institutionalizing individuals by placing them in age-restricted housing with little or no support. I see it firsthand during my visits to public housing sites in Enfield. We need to act before a serious safety situation occurs in Connecticut between a disabled resident lacking proper support and a senior. The current situation is unsafe for both the disabled individual and the senior.

I am a proud advocate for supportive housing. In fact, I wish more Enfield officials believed in supportive housing. Supportive housing works because it provides proper financial and medical support for disabled residents. The same is not occurring for disabled residents in age-restricted housing. Proposed Bill 6141 starts the discussion about producing proper support for disabled residents in age-restricted housing.

We are at the tipping point regarding the amount of disabled residents living in age-restricted housing. The state has talked about this issue at length, but has failed to act. On public safety grounds I feel that it is our obligation to find a way to mitigate and improve this situation this legislative session. That is why I submitted and why I support Proposed Bill 6141. Thank you for your time. I will gladly answer any questions.



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