

*Conservator of
Resident*

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RE: General Assembly
Proposed Bill No. 203
LCO No. 1422

Letter to the Committee on Planning and Development:

I am writing in opposition to the proposed amendments relating to Senate Bill 203-
An Act Concerning Community Residences.

I have been practicing law since 1996. For five of those years, I was a state appointed child protection attorney representing indigent children and their parents; for the last five years, I have been involved with indigent clients needing either a probate court appointed attorney or conservator. During my involvement as a court appointed attorney and/or conservator, I have seen my fair share of clients who have mental health issues, which I would like to remind every one of you who may be considering support of this proposed bill, that these are neurobiological diseases. Those having these diseases should not be treated any differently than those with other medical diseases and ailments. (The insurance industry figured this out many years ago.) To do so, would be to discriminate against those who do not have a voice and who are relying on housing in communities like the one in New Milford just like anyone else.

I know personally that CHD has worked effortlessly and passionately with the state to set up the current program at Red Fox Lane in New Milford that allows those in need to live healthy and productive lives in the community. The four men who currently reside there were vetted as candidates by DHMAS and by staff members at facilities that once housed them, including the Connecticut Valley State Hospital. With a team of specialists, I helped develop the plan for one of these men to transition into the community. I am appalled that this program could be taken away from my conservatee or any of the others because of their medical diseases.

It has been my experience that this type of housing has proven to be cost effective to taxpayers. In addition, the diversity is important to our communities. Further, laws have been established by our State politicians to ensure that all individuals are not discriminated against, and that they are given the same opportunity to get housing and thrive in their own communities. Finally, the bill proposes that community residences should be required to comply with all local zoning and land use regulations. CHD worked with the New Milford Zoning department to clarify the zoning regulations, and received notice that this residence could exist as outlined

before going ahead with the purchase. It is my understanding after working closely with CHD for the past three years, that CHD has followed all laws and regulations, been up front about its interests, and has renovated and improved a house that sat vacant.

I am in support of CHD's efforts, in general, and the Red Fox Lane program called Compass House, in particular. The wonderful work the CHD staff does for the individuals that receive its services and support must continue. Please consider the consequences and barriers that this Bill will place on programs like CHD's and the indigent men and women that have come to rely on them.

Thank you,

Gail A. Bedoukian