



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING



Evonne M. Klein
Commissioner

WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
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Evonne Klein, Commissioner
Department of Housing

Senator Flexer, Representative Hennessy and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding House Bills 5108 and 6389.

House Bill 5108 - AN ACT CONCERNING AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES:

House Bill 5108 requires the commissioners of Housing and Veterans' Affairs to assist veterans and active duty members of the armed forces in securing affordable housing. The Department of Housing (DOH) is proud to assist veterans through a variety of initiatives and programs. Thanks to Governor Malloy's unprecedented financial commitment to the development and preservation of affordable and supportive housing, DOH is already working towards the goals of this bill by supporting the creation of new units for veterans. DOH and its partners on the Interagency Committee on Supportive Housing recently awarded grants to 3 new supportive, affordable multifamily housing developments in Bridgeport, Hamden and Manchester that include 21 new units for homeless veterans. The department also required applicants for its June 2014 Competitive Housing Assistance for Multifamily Properties (CHAMP) funding round to include at least two units with a preference for homeless veterans in their development proposals, yielding 12 new units of housing for veterans supported by rental subsidies. DOH is also working with several developers who are in various stages of producing affordable and/or supportive housing for veterans.

In addition, DOH currently prioritizes veterans under our Security Deposit Guarantee Program, which aids eligible individuals and families in securing housing by guaranteeing a security deposit to landlords of up to two month's rent. DOH further assists with obtaining housing by funding a free rental housing locator service, the CT Housing Search, which provides assistance to all residents in searching for affordable, accessible or market rate housing in the state. Owners of our state-funded housing developments are required to list their vacant units on this website and it also includes projects funded with other state and federal resources as well as private market rate housing. DOH and the state Department of Veterans' Affairs also continue to work together to ensure that information on housing options and services for veterans are updated and that this information is disseminated to the different groups that assist veterans, such as the municipal Veterans Service Contacts who act as an ombudsman, guiding veterans to the appropriate local, state or federal resources.

Additional assistance is provided to veterans that are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless in this state. These veterans can be connected to permanent housing through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Connecticut Homeless Veterans Hotline and the VA National Homeless Veteran Hotline, which is available twenty-four hours a day. Staff from these hotlines assist veterans in securing

housing through the Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program that provides rental subsidies and support services, Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) that provides rapid-rehousing assistance, and other transitional and permanent supportive housing options. To further assist these vulnerable veterans with housing, the Reaching Home Veterans Workgroup, comprising of state and federal agencies as well as community partners, recently launched a website for landlords willing to rent to veterans in need. This website provides information about the critical programs providing rental assistance for veterans and list their units for inclusion on a statewide database accessible to key veterans housing staff. This landlord platform is part of the Governor's effort to end veteran homelessness by the end of this year. DOH is a proud partner of this effort, providing leadership and resources such as 50 rental assistance certificates for homeless veterans.

House Bill 6389 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY RAPID REHOUSING:

While DOH supports the intent of House Bill 6389, we would like to respectfully inform the committee that Connecticut already has a program designed to assist veteran families at risk of homelessness to maintain their housing and to rapidly re-house veterans who are homeless. This successful, federally-funded program is called the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program (SSVF), and is currently administered state-wide through four providers: Columbus House, Workplace, Inc., Community Renewal Team, and Veterans, Inc. Services include outreach, case management, assistance in obtaining VA and other public benefits, and temporary financial assistance to cover moving costs, security deposits, rent and utilities.