

## **House Bill 5619 - An Act Conveying Certain Parcels of State Land and Requiring a Study of Certain State Real Property - Section 6**

Testimony Submitted by Ann Faust, Program Coordinator of the Middlesex County Coalition on Housing and Homelessness to the Government Administration and Elections Committee on March 14, 2016

Dear Members of the Committee,

I thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Middlesex County Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (MCCHH), regarding Section 6 of House Bill 5619. I am writing in support of Section 6 to allow the transfer of the Shepherd Home property to the City of Middletown for transfer or lease to a developer/service provider for use as permanent supportive housing for people who are exiting homelessness with an emphasis on veterans.

The Middlesex County Coalition on Housing and Homelessness was formed in 2007 to coordinate the County's effort to prevent and end homelessness. We actively seek long-term and sustainable solutions to this issue, rather than continuing to manage episodes of homelessness as they occur, and to spare all residents of Middlesex County the trauma and indignity of homelessness. Coalition membership is composed of representatives of service provider, civic, community, business, consumer, non-profit, religious, and other stakeholder groups working collaboratively to prevent and end homelessness.

We have been working to redevelop the Shepherd Home since its closing in 2013 and determined that it is best used to create permanent supportive housing. Additional units are essential to ending chronic homelessness in Middlesex County and throughout the State. Permanent supportive housing is the most effective model in assisting people with high needs and many barriers to housing. It is proven to save taxpayer dollars by reducing costs to first responders, hospitals, mental health programs and the criminal justice system.

Currently, there are sixty people who need permanent supportive housing in our region, but are unable to access the program due to a shortage of units. They are the most vulnerable citizens in our community, who could benefit the most from housing that is affordable with the services needed to help them stay housed and healthy. The redevelopment of Shepherd Home fills the void in our homelessness system by creating approximately 30 units of housing with a portion of the units dedicated to veterans.

The City of Middletown, in partnership with MCCHH, issued a Request for Proposals, to prospective developers and service providers. We received three high quality proposals from organizations that are well qualified to redevelop Shepherd Home and manage the facility. A committee of city leaders from the for-profit and non-profit community is currently reviewing the proposals and will recommend a preferred developer to the Middletown City Council in late spring 2016. It is anticipated that the project can begin in the fall of 2016.

The conveyance of the Shepherd Home property is critical meeting the needs of our most vulnerable citizens. In these times of fiscal constraint, it will also save taxpayer dollars. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on House Bill 5619.

Sincerely,  
Ann Faust  
Program Coordinator  
Middlesex County Coalition on Housing and Homelessness