

TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT COALITION OF PROPERTY OWNERS

RE: HB 5335 AAC RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LANDLORDS AND TENANTS REGARDING  
THE TREATMENT OF BED BUG INFESTATIONS.

SB 154 AAC SECURITY DEPOSITS

Tuesday February 23, 2016, 2 P.M. Room 1D Legislative office building.

Good afternoon. My name is John Souza and I'm the President of the CT Coalition of Property Owners and a full time landlord. The Connecticut Coalition of Property Owners (CCOPO) is the largest property owner association in Connecticut for midsize and small landlords. CCOPO has affiliate chapters in Bridgeport, Enfield, Stamford, Windham and West Hartford. Collectively CCOPO members own thousands of rental units throughout Connecticut.

Bed bug awareness has increased significantly in the last few years. Landlords have learned that if an infestation is left unchecked it can spread to other units and become an extreme nuisance to the entire building, costing more in treatment and vacancy if not resolved quickly. Tenants are more aware of the possibility of an infestation which reduces the lag time between infestation and treatment and also are realizing that they too have a role in controlling and eliminating bed bugs.

When tenants and landlords work together cooperatively the problem can be solved.

We cannot support HB 5335 as drafted.

CCOPO Opposes section 1 paragraph (b) (1) as written. Landlords don't need to hire a qualified inspector at a cost of \$75-\$125 to confirm that there is an infestation of bed bugs for several reasons, 1) often tenants conclude they have bed bugs because of bumpy rash on their arm or they feel itchy and assume it must be bed bugs. I do the visual inspection with them to alleviate their mind, at no cost to anyone and a fifteen minute visual inspection of bedding, furniture and surroundings can verify if there is a problem once one knows what to look for. Thanks to the many resources on the internet including the brochure I have here, finding evidence of bed bugs is not hard if they exist. 2) If an infestation is found by the landlord, we can proceed directly with a treatment plan. If the tenants do what is required for preparation and maintenance, the infestation can be treated by the landlord utilizing multiple resources from the internet. If the landlord prefers he can hire a licensed professional to treat the infestation, but the tenants must perform the preparation and continue the maintenance for any treatments to be effective. 3) Lastly, a requirement to hire a professional inspector may be abused by vindictive tenants who seek to punish landlords by repeatedly requesting inspections.

Landlords accept the responsibility under present law that requires us to identify and treat an infestation of any kind of vermin, and tenants can presently contact their local housing or health department to lodge a complaint if they feel their requests are not satisfactorily resolved (like any other code violation). Whether landlords choose to inspect for themselves, or hire a contractor is a business decision like any other. So please let landlords willing to take the time to educate themselves conduct the inspections. If landlords can treat infestations, they surely have the ability to identify a problem also.

Please amend HB 5335, LCO No. 1067 to allow landlords the option of hiring an outside inspector

CCOPO supports SB 154 AAC Security Deposits. Security deposit interest should be credited to the tenants rent account. In the present low interest environment security deposit interest checks often go uncashed leading to accounting headaches.

CCOPO also supports HB5342 AAC Appeals To Fair Housing Procedures. Please grant property owners the right to appeal, currently CT owners have no appeal rights at an administrative hearing and a tenant has unlimited appeals opportunities!

This completes my testimony. Thank you for your consideration.