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Testimony of Raphael L. Podolsky

Planning and Development Committee public hearing -- February 19, 2016

S.B. 86 -- Exemption of three-family buildings from Fire Safety Code

Recommended Committee action: REJECTION OF SECTIONS 1 AND 2

Under existing law, one- and two-family buildings are generally exempt from the State Fire Safety Code. Section 1 of S.B. 86 would exempt three-family buildings as well (apparently except for smoke detectors). We strongly oppose this provision, which would put both tenants and owners occupying those buildings in serious danger of injury from fire. It is particularly undesirable to exempt three-family buildings, since they have long been covered by the Tenement House Act, a fundamental health and safety law that goes back, I believe, to the early part of the twentieth century. See General Statutes §47a-50, which defines "tenement house" as any building occupied or designed to be occupied by "three or more families." We can think of no good reason why now, after all these years, three-family buildings should no longer have to comply with the State Fire Safety Code.

Sections 1 and 2 of the bill also exempt new three-family buildings from carbon monoxide detection requirements. Like the more general exemption in Section 1, we see harm rather than benefit in this provision.