



House Bill 5278
An Act Concerning Automatic Fire Extinguishing Systems in Residential Buildings Designed to be Occupied by Two Families

Testimony of Commissioner Melody A. Currey

Public Safety & Security Committee
March 1, 2016

The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) houses the Office of the State Fire Marshal and the Office of the State Building Inspector, which are responsible for State Fire Safety Code, State Fire Prevention Code, the State Building Code and other code-related matters. DAS offers the following comments on House Bill 5278, An Act Concerning Fire Extinguishing Systems in Residential Buildings Designed to be Occupied by Two Families.

C.G.S. § 29-31 establishes the state-wide requirements relating to automatic fire extinguishing systems in various types of buildings: new homes with four or more stories, hotels and motels, senior housing, and residential buildings with twelve or more units occupied by elderly.

House Bill 5278 proposes to add a requirement for all new two-family homes to have an automatic fire extinguishing system installed on each floor. While DAS appreciates the intentions that motivated this proposed change, DAS notes that two-family homes are currently exempt from Fire Safety Code requirements, including regular inspections. Therefore, it is unclear how this proposed change would be implemented and enforced.

Additionally, DAS is concerned that this proposal does not address the many barriers that impede the effective implementation of residential fire sprinkler requirements. In 2010, the Codes Amendment Subcommittee of the Codes and Standards Committee created the Residential Fire Sprinkler Research Working Group, which was composed of various industry, fire, and building experts. This Working Group researched the various requirements needed to implement such a change and identified 13 areas where comprehensive solutions would be needed before such a mandate could be effectively created. Their report is attached to this testimony. We believe these findings should be addressed in advance of any legislative mandate.



DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

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Finally, DAS calls the Committee's attention to C.G.S. §47a-3f, enacted in the 2015 June Special Session, codifying the requirement that landlords provide notice in their rental agreements as to the existence or nonexistence of an operative fire sprinkler system. DAS believes this fairly new requirement is an important interim measure because enables citizens who are interested in renting in buildings not regulated by the Fire Safety Code to make informed decisions about what protections exist.

Thank you for allowing DAS to provide comment on this bill.