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Statement on

SB 238, AN ACT CONCERNING ADOPTION OF MUNICIPAL ORDINANCES REGARDING AUTOMATIC FIRE EXTINGUISHING SYSTEMS IN NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS.

OPPOSED

Submitted to the Public Safety and Security Committee
March 1, 2016

By Michael Barbaro
2017 State President
Connecticut REALTORS®

Good morning Senator Larson, Representative Dargan, ranking members Guglielmo and Zupkus and members of the committee. My name is Michael Barbaro and I am a REALTOR® and builder from the New Haven area and the 2017 President of the Connecticut REALTORS® (“CTR”).

This testimony is in opposition to **SB 238, AN ACT CONCERNING ADOPTION OF MUNICIPAL ORDINANCES REGARDING AUTOMATIC FIRE EXTINGUISHING SYSTEMS IN NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS**. This bill would allow municipalities to adopt ordinances requiring automatic fire extinguishing systems in new residential buildings.

Specifically, it states any municipality may adopt an ordinance requiring that each residential building intended for occupancy by one or two families and for which a building permit for new occupancy is issued shall have an automatic fire extinguishing system approved by the local fire marshal on each floor. This proposal would allow for municipalities to decide if they wish to mandate all new construction of single and two family homes. CTR believes this action could result in over 169 different regulations on a new sprinkler system, creating much confusion for all parties involved.

CTR is also opposed to this bill for the same reason we oppose **HB 5278, AN ACT CONCERNING AUTOMATIC FIRE EXTINGUISHING SYSTEMS IN NEW RESIDENTIAL**

BUILDINGS TO BE OCCUPIED BY TWO FAMILIES which would require mandatory sprinklers in two family residences. The cost to mandate such an item in a new home is very expensive.

Building a home or buying a home is the largest financial decision most of us will ever make. Sprinkler system costs are very expensive, especially when tied to municipal water supplies. These devices also require regular maintenance and malfunctions can damage property.

Building materials and design in home construction today provide improved safety from earlier years. Mandating the addition of sprinkler systems costing many thousands of dollars to new home construction could prevent those who would otherwise build a home from doing so by pricing them out of the building market. It will also make new home construction built with these costly sprinklers that much more expensive to sell and thereby that much less competitively priced compared to the existing home market where there are no expensive sprinklers. The best remedy is what we already have in place: buyers may voluntarily purchase a sprinkler system if that additional system is wanted.

There's no question that smoke detectors provide protections necessary to alert families and individuals of a fire; and existing detector laws ensure working detectors are in homes at the time of transfer; or alternatively that buyers receive fees that could be used to purchase detectors. Any buyer who believes the cost to add a sprinkler system to their new home is valuable to them continues to have the option to do that voluntarily.

We urge you to consider any new cost, especially such a huge new cost, will damage Connecticut's already fragile real estate market. Any home that is not built costs construction jobs and many other related small business jobs.

We do not support this bill. Thank you for allowing me to speak before you and I will try to answer any questions you may have.