

**Joint Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding
February 26, 2016
Testimony of Lisa Tepper Bates, CCEH, on SB 11**

Senators Fonfara and Frantz, Representatives Berger and Davis, and members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 11, An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State for Capital Improvements, Transportation and Other Purposes on behalf of the 75 member agencies working to end homelessness that the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness represents.

CCEH supports the preservation of the bond funds for the Housing Trust Fund, the Homelessness Prevention and Response Fund, and the Housing Development and Rehabilitation Fund at the Department of Housing, in particular. These are critical resources for expanding affordable housing and preventing and ending homelessness in Connecticut.

Nonprofit providers of services to the homeless across Connecticut are working closely with our state agency partners to create a coordinated response system to end homelessness. We have made substantial headway:

- Connecticut was recognized this month by the federal government for effectively ended homelessness among Veterans in our state, after gaining recognition in August, 2015 for ending the long term homelessness of veterans with disabilities (chronic homelessness).
- Our next goal is to end all chronic homelessness in Connecticut by the end of 2016. We are on track to achieve this important goal, as evidenced by the fact that we reduced chronic homelessness in Connecticut by 30% from 2014-2015

Ending chronic homelessness is the right thing to do and the smart thing to do for Connecticut: national research shows that communities can save up to 70% of the costs in emergency services, hospitals, jails, and other community services by providing housing and supports to those who have experienced chronic homelessness. In these times of reduced resources in Connecticut, we can ill afford to waste public precious resources.

The housing and homelessness resources addressed through SB 11 are vital to the success of Connecticut's efforts to end chronic homelessness and to make headway toward ending other forms of homelessness. CCEH supports these commitments as important investments in these critical efforts.

The Homelessness Prevention and Response Fund will create rapid re-housing resources and scattered site supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness in our state. These resources are vital to our ability to end chronic homelessness. Rapid Re-Housing quickly connects individuals and families who fall into homelessness back into housing by providing a time-limited subsidy to lower barrier households.

Ending homelessness does not mean that no one will ever experience a housing crisis again. It does mean that we will have a coordinated system that can respond to each case of homelessness and provide assistance to resolve each case as needed. Building adequate capacity for Rapid Re-Housing is central to laying the foundation for the success of Coordinated Access, our effort to closely coordinate all homeless resources in each community. This coordination will allow us to make progress toward ending homelessness, but depends on the exit of clients to housing, so that emergency shelter space can be made available for new clients in urgent need. Rapid Re-Housing is critical to expedite the exits of Connecticut residents from homelessness to housing.

The Housing Trust Fund and the Housing Development and Rehabilitation Fund (Flex Funds) are also critical. Connecticut ranks 6th in the nation in median monthly housing costs. Half of the state's renters pay more than is affordable for their housing. The Department of Housing (DOH) is working hard to address many years of lack of investment in housing from prior Administrations, creating some 8,000 new units of affordable housing. There is more to do to address the gap in affordable housing in Connecticut. However, CCEH applauds the efforts of the Governor, the legislature, and the Department of Housing in working together to fill this gap.

Thank you for considering my testimony and thank you for your support to efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Lisa Tepper Bates,
Executive Director
Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness