

**TESTIMONY OF CHRISTINA ZIELENSKI
IN OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL 5342**

Distinguished members of the committee, thank you for taking the time to read my testimony and consider my perspective. My family and I were victims of housing discrimination, and it cost us dearly. But under the terms proposed by HB 5342, I would not have been able to recover because my losses weren't easily proved by a receipt.

Last year, my fiancée, my teenaged daughter, and I were looking for new housing. At the time, we were living in an apartment in a high crime area with low-performing schools. It was not uncommon for us to see drug deals transacted directly outside our home, and my daughter once witnessed an adult male urinating on our lawn. I elected to homeschool my daughter, not because I am against public school but because I feared for what type of education and environment she'd face in our local assigned school. Given these circumstances, it was imperative that we find a new place, and fast.

In the process, I found what I believed to be a perfect spot. The price was right, and the schools and crime rate would have been a significant improvement over where we lived. But we were turned away, not because of bad credit or lack of references, but only for the simple fact that a minor child was part of our household. The real estate agent that listed the property told me that the owner did not want to rent to us because of my daughter, and then she changed the advertisement to indicate that only singles or couples should apply.

I was devastated by the rejection, and confused. It didn't seem right that without even taking my application, I could be turned away. I continued to search for housing, but could find nothing else that fit our needs and budget. The rejection and frustration of being stuck in such a bad location overwhelmed me. I felt anxious, sad, and embarrassed. I worried constantly about

my daughter and her education and exposure to crime in our neighborhood. Our living conditions and the impact of the discrimination caused conflict within our family.

When I turned to the Connecticut Fair Housing Center for assistance, they were able to help me reach a settlement with the real estate company to compensate me for the distress that my family experienced as a result of the discrimination. It's hard to put a number on knowing that your child, a vulnerable teenager, had to continue to witness crime and lewd behavior just outside her window. It's hard to attach an economic figure to feeling helpless and like you've failed your family. What are good schools worth? What is a safe neighborhood worth?

If HB 5342 passes, people like me who turn to the CHRO hearing process would get nothing to compensate us for the losses we experienced as a result of illegal housing discrimination. Please vote no on this bill. Thank you for your time.