



CONNECTICUT
LEGAL
RIGHTS
PROJECT, INC.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF KATHLEEN FLAHERTY, ESQ.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CT LEGAL RIGHTS PROJECT, INC.
HOUSING COMMITTEE, MARCH 1, 2016

SUPPORTING HB 5397, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL
SERVICES BY LANDLORDS

Representative Butler, Senator Winfield, and members of the Housing Committee:

Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP) was established in 1990, pursuant to a consent decree, to represent low income adults in Connecticut with mental health conditions, who reside in hospitals or the community, on matters related to their treatment, recovery, and civil rights. We protect the rights of our clients to live in decent, safe, affordable housing in the community of their choice.

We support HB 5397 because all tenants have the right to reside in housing that complies with building and housing code standards. Connecticut law requires a landlord to “maintain in good and safe working order and condition all electrical, plumbing, sanitary, heating, ventilating and other facilities and appliances and elevators, supplied or required to be supplied by [the landlord.]” C.G.S. §47a-7 (a) (4). When a landlord fails to supply such essential services, and that failure is not due to something beyond the landlord’s control, the amount of time that a tenant has to live in sub-standard conditions should be limited as much as reasonably possible. Current statutes give a landlord two business days to fix the problem. The proposed bill would shorten that time frame to 48 hours.

If a problem occurs early in the week (Monday) – under both the existing law and the proposed bill the landlord would have until Wednesday to provide essential services. However, a tenant who experienced a problem late on Thursday, February 11, 2016 might have been left without a remedy until as late as Wednesday, February 17, 2016 – due to holidays on both the Friday and Monday on either side of that weekend. This bill is about essential services -- heat, electricity, gas, water. A tenant should not have to wait nearly a week before having the remedy of being able to secure alternate housing. Low income tenants usually do not have the option of procuring those essential services at their own expense and deducting it from the rent later, simply because they do not have discretionary resources available to make those additional expenditures.