



New Haven

Thank you Sen Flexer, Sen Kelly, Rep Serra, and members of the Aging Committee, for the opportunity to comment in support of SB 772 – AN ACT REQUIRING EMERGENCY GENERATORS IN CERTAIN HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY.

During my 19 years as a New Haven police officer I have responded to thousands of tragic incidents ranging from multi-death motor vehicle accidents to aircraft crashes. One of these remains vivid in my memory, mainly because it was predictable and preventable. I am referring to an incident in 2000 at the Bella Vista Apartments.

We were in the midst of a heat wave when the apartment complex experienced a brown out. Power to all five of the towers was out, disabling the elevator service, and there were no generators on site. There were over 1000 elderly residents trapped inside the towers and temperatures rapidly rose to over 100 degrees. Many of these residents had medical issues that were exacerbated by the excessive heat.

Every officer on duty was called to the scene to assist the Fire Department with the evacuation. We began with those who were dependent on medical equipment, ranging from oxygen to dialysis. For many, descending fifteen flights of stairs was impossible, so we physically carried them down. Although they were grateful for our assistance, it was apparent that they were shook by the incident. Indeed, several experienced full-blown panic attacks while being carried down the 15 flights of stairs. For others, the mere disruption of their regimens caused anxiety and disorientation. We were very lucky to have evacuated all of the residents without any major medical traumas that night.

One of the reasons this has stayed with me for so long is because I saw, firsthand, the effects this needless uprooting had on hundreds of elderly individuals. Although we cannot protect them from all unpredictable occurrences, we can predict that this will occur again. Knowing that, I believe it is our responsibility to ensure they are not traumatized again.

Respectfully,

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