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STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING



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Commissioner

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGING**

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Evonne M. Klein, Commissioner  
Department of Housing

**Raised Bill 772: AN ACT REQUIRING EMERGENCY GENERATORS IN CERTAIN  
HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY**

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Senator Flexer, Senator Kelly, Representative Serra and honorable members of the Aging Committee, my name is Evonne Klein and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Housing (DOH). Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding Raised Bill 772 – AN ACT REQUIRING EMERGENCY GENERATORS IN CERTAIN HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY.

Raised Bill 772 would require that any public housing project, consisting of 100 or more units for elderly persons, to have an emergency power generator, capable of providing four to twelve hours of emergency power for each housing unit in the development. While the Department of Housing supports the concept of providing emergency power to the state's elderly residents, we must oppose this legislation as it will come at a significant cost to the already financially overburdened housing authorities in our state. We view this proposal as an unfunded mandate, which will only have an adverse impact on the low income residents who this legislation is intended to serve. Housing authorities' primary source of income is generated from the rental payments collected from its residents. Without an appropriation from the state, which we do not expect there to be, the housing authorities will be forced to raise rents on their residents to cover the cost of the generators.

The cost required to install these emergency generators is a great concern, because there is no uniform standard for the design of these housing developments. For example, a housing authority may have over 100 units, but they could be "scattered site" developments. This means that there could be several smaller buildings scattered throughout the property. As drafted, this legislation would require each of those individual buildings to install an emergency generator capable of providing emergency power in line with the proposal's specific parameters. There is no "one size fits all" solution for this kind of proposal, and the likelihood that rent increases would occur to cover the cost is a major concern for the Department.

Most of these properties do have staff whose responsibilities include the identification of community services, emergency services, and the determination of how this information is shared with all of its residents. Most of these properties have on-site community rooms or facilities that do have temporary heat and power in the event of an emergency, though the emergency power sources may not provide power to each individual housing unit. When those properties that do not have such a resource, property owners are encouraged to identify other local resources which can be accessed by their residents, and to provide such information to their residents. We do not believe it is in the best interest of these developments' financial sustainability to require these generators to be in place.

That being said, the Department of Housing does encourage housing authorities to work with their municipal leaders to apply for funding from sources such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Small Cities program or the Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) to secure funding for emergency power generators if there is a local need. These funding opportunities do exist, and do not require an additional state allocation or appropriation at this time. However there is not enough funding from these sources available to cover every municipality that would be required to provide an emergency generator under this proposal. This is why we believe the determination should be left up to the municipality. We also encourage municipalities to prepare and employ Disaster Planning initiatives, which includes working closely with local emergency management officials to prepare for power outages and to identify and communicate their emergency service needs when a power outage does occur.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit written testimony before your committee.