

CHAIRPERSON: Representative Brandon  
McGee

SENATORS: Anwar, Hwang, Kushner

REPRESENTATIVES: Zullo, Dauphinais, Butler,  
Gonzalez, Frey, Rose,  
Smith

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Okay, I'll give about another  
minute or two to allow some other members to join  
us. There's several press conferences happening.  
Every committee meetings happening at the same time  
so we wanna allow folks time to get here.

To Housing Committee Public Hearing today from noon  
-- our first hour will be allocated to our  
Commissioners and elected officials. I think we  
have three so that should go by rather quickly.

In the interest of safety, I would ask you to note  
the location of and access to the exits in this  
hearing room. Bathrooms are right outside those  
doors. Not literally but you know where.

And I think -- I think we're pretty much good on  
those announcements.

Shortly after our Commissioners and elected  
officials have had their opportunity to testify  
before the Committee, we will then open this public  
hearing to the general public.

During that time, individuals will have three  
minutes to give -- read their testimony, give  
remarks, etcetera, but the idea is to really hone in  
on what you want this committee to know about a

particular bill that you are in support of, in opposition of and why.

And I'm sure many of our members, once they arrive, will have questions or comments in response to your testimony.

So at this time, I'd like to call Commissioner Beth Bye, Office of Early Childhood.

COMMISSIONER BETH BYE: Good afternoon.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Good afternoon.

COMMISSIONER BETH BYE: Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, Senator Hwang, Representative Zullo and distinguished members of the Housing Committee.

My name is Beth Bye, I'm the Commissioner at the Office of Early Childhood. I'm here today to testify concerning House Bill 5121, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN PROTECTIONS FOR GROUP AND FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES.

The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood Advance is a two-generation family centered approach in pursuit of optimal health, safety and learning outcomes for young children.

Through core programs, we support infant, toddler care, preschool, afterschool care, child care and youth camps. Also home visiting, early intervention that is designed to address developmental delays.

We're working hard toward building a coordinated cost effective system that supports Connecticut's youngest children and families.

We very much support the intent of House Bill 5121. The Office of Early Childhood licenses family childcare homes, group homes and centers. This bill seeks to remove barriers to operating family childcare homes or group child care homes.

We are very much interested in expanding the number of licensed child care programs in our communities and family child care homes are a big part of that strategy.

Family child care homes serve a great number of infants and toddlers, as many of you may know, and in Connecticut we are short 50,000 child care spaces for children who are infants and toddlers whose parents need to work. Fifty thousand spaces. So we have a lot of work to do.

I want to clarify one part of this bill that I think is important to pay attention to and that is that group child care homes, as they currently exist, can operate outside of a private residence. So for example, a licensed group child care home could operate in a strip mall.

Inspections and approvals conducted by local officials -- we rely on those to ensure that all licensed group child care homes and centers are healthy and safe for all occupants. And these inspections include, but are not limited to, fire safety, structural integrity, parking and environmental conditions.

At this point, the way the bill is written, it's unclear whether section three of this bill would exempt all licensed group child care homes from such oversight that includes those that are not in private residences or if the intent is to exclude

group child care homes that are located in residences.

So we wanna be really clear about what the intent of this bill is because as I said, we support this, we wanna expand family child care homes but we do have concerns in that the group homes are in the center licenses, those go together.

So the Committee could choose to stipulate group child care homes that are located in a residence. That would take care of our concerns. We just wouldn't want to have center-like programs opening up in communities that were not regulated through the zoning. So I think that's a fixable challenge.

In closing, family child care makes up a core component of our child care system. The providers care for our youngest children, providing them with a healthy, safe, nurturing environment during a period of critical growth and development.

Family child care homes are also an economic driver in our communities -- both in the role as small businesses and enabling parents to get to work, often in child care deserts because another challenge for parents with child care is getting children to child care.

And if you have a family child care home in your neighborhood, then you just need to drop your child off close and get to work. If you don't have transportation, it's great to have a child care home -- a child group child care home or a family child care in your neighborhood.

So we see this as critical to the state's workforce development plan. We must support the growth and

fiscal stability of these small business owners and this bill moves us in that direction.

I also wanted to note I'm on the Governor's Council for Women and Girls. This is a priority for that council because it supports women in the workforce and it supports primarily women-owned businesses.

Thank you for your time and attention and I'm happy to answer your questions now or at a later date. Thank you very much.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you for the work that you've done in this -- in this space of early childhood and we commend you and always have looked forward to working with you.

Before I ask my question, I just wanna let the Committee know we're not printing off thousands of pieces of paper. We're trying to be green and all that good stuff. So I know many of you have walked in, you're looking for your packets.

So I encourage you to use your new laptops to take a look at many of the testimonies. I'm still trying to figure out how to get it on my laptop as well so I'm with the rest of the crew here.

But Commissioner, do we know how many towns currently have zoning regulations against group and family child care homes?

COMMISSIONER BETH BYE: I would say -- I don't have a number but what happens is, I think, they get caught up in regulations that really weren't intended for family child care homes.

I think this bill is trying to say someone has residence, they wanna provide child care in that

residence. If they had their own children, they could. So we don't -- there've been places that sometimes discourage this and I think as a community we wanna say, "No, these are valuable small business owners in our community and we don't want to create onerous regulations that get in the way of them opening."

I was with some this weekend at a meeting and this is important to them. And to them having a more streamlined process that takes local zoning, if they get involved, from slowing them down or preventing them, even, in some cases. And I'm sure you'll hear testimony with specific examples.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Sure. Thank you. Any questions from the committee members? No?

COMMISSIONER BETH BYE: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER BETH BYE: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Up next we have Commissioner Seila Bruno, Department of Housing. Seila.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: Seila.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Seila, oh I had it right the first time.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: Mosquera-Bruno. Good afternoon, Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, Senator -- Representative Zullo and members of the Housing Committee.

I am Seila Mosquera-Bruno, Commissioner of Housing here before you today to testify in support of House Bill 5128, AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO

STATUTES REGARDING BOND-FINANCED STATE HOUSING PROGRAMS.

The proposal legislation to redefine administrative expense for purposes of certain bond-financed for state housing programs and to make minor revisions to the statute concerning the Homelessness Prevention and Response Fund.

We would like for the language in Connecticut general statute 8-37qq, the proposed revision is intended to update the definition of administrative expenses. In 8-37qq(a)(2), to be consistent with a definition that immediately precedes in the statute of 8-37qq(a)(1), which is the definition of Bond-Financed State Housing Program. To be clear, the language in 8-37qq(a)(1) is broad and inclusive, while the language in 8-37qq(a)(2) is limited and problematic.

Currently, the definition of our administrative expense is limited to our older program and specific bond-finances activities.

Unfortunately, this limited language does not include reference to the newest and most active bond finance sustained housing programs, included but not limited to the Affordable Housing Flex program and the Housing Trust Fund HTF program.

These two programs are primarily goals -- their primary use is to produce and preserve affordable housing. As such, we have had instances where we have been enabled to cover necessary administrative costs for these two bond financed programs. These expenses are typically legal fees for outside counsel, publications, cost for required notices, environmental testing and carrying costs.

Over the past decade, the state shifted away from appropriating affordable housing capital funding under the narrow statutory programs currently stated in the definition.

Instead, nearly all of the state's affordable housing capital funding is appropriated under the Flex and HDF programs.

Adding the reference to these programs to the definition will ensure the bond funds can be used as originally contemplated to pay appropriate administrative expenses associated with a capital funding program that ones that are actually in use by the agency.

Relative to Connecticut General Statute 8-37mm, this change concerns the Homeless Prevention and Response Fund, HPRF. The purpose of the HPRF is to positive fund -- is to provide funding in exchange for units that will be restricted for use by participants in a Rapid Rehousing program or individuals and families in need of supportive housing.

Providing consistency in the way the funding could be used will simplify the administration of the HPRF and likely increase the number of units that can be subsidized and restricted under the program and therefore the number of individuals and families can benefit from it.

DOH offers the following comments on H.B. 5127, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE'S LONG-TERM AND SHORT-TERM PLANNING CONCERNING HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

While this proposal appears to be well-intended and though DOH not only supports but goes great lengths to be both collaborative and inclusive in its

planning, this proposed bill would put additional requirements on this process which are both excessive and costly, would alter the parameters of our efforts as a statewide agency and have the perception of making affordable housing a regional issue in direct opposition to the concept of home rule.

To be more specific, the Federal requirement is to set housing development goals to affirmatively further fair housing and does not require specific numerical goals.

While we support the need to and actively pursue affirmatively furthering fair housing, we disagree with the setting specific numerical goals.

The nature of housing development requires flexibility to match the ebbs and flows of projects. This would effectively prevent the Department from taking advantage of opportunities in other areas as they arise.

DOH offers the following comments on H.B. 5126, AN ACT CONCERNING INSPECTIONS OF RENTAL PROPERTY PRIOR TO OCCUPANCY OR TERMINATION, LATE RENTAL PAYMENTS AND DESIGNATION OF A RENTAL HOUSING OMBUDSMAN.

The Department is opposed to Section three of the proposed bill, as complaints of this kind are currently and correctly within the jurisdiction of the local public health and housing code enforcement departments.

Further, the information required to be collected, analyzed and disseminated are not within the current capabilities of the Department and without

significant increase in both staff and financial resources, they would not be possible to execute.

Thank you. My team and I are ready to answer any questions that you may have.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Commissioner. Any comments, questions? Senator Anwar.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Commissioner, for leadership and thank you for being here. So the 5128 was a bill that we had in the last session and unfortunately we were not able to pass that and I think there's an administrative component that actually requires us to move forward with this.

So hopefully your testimony would help us hopefully move this along to support the Department of Housing.

I want to share a couple of thoughts on the 5127. And in -- and this is more asking about the long-term plan the Department of Housing should have.

Now Connecticut is one of the most segregated states of this entire region and this bill is asking us to -- or Department of Housing -- to have a plan of action around it.

So if you can help me understand why our -- why are you concerned about aspects of this bill?

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: So I'm gonna ask Michael Santoro to come and help me out here with the details. But we -- the Department right now does conduct a five-year plan. This bill calls for a yearly plan.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: So having a yearly plan, it takes a long time, energy and resources and we are a very small department. So if my staff will just dedicate a time to plan, it's not gonna do anything.

But I will let Michael to explain you a little more.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): So it's more based on the -- the time it's gonna take to give the reports rather than actually addressing the true issue.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: The time and the financial implications that will have. But Michael, if you can add a little more.

MICHAEL SANTORO: Certainly, Commissioner. Again, Mike Santoro, I'm the Director of Policy and Research at the Department of Housing.

I'm responsible for all the planning activities at the Department. The particular piece of legislation, its requirements over and above both our five year and our annual action plans.

Let me be perfectly clear. We do prepare both an annual plan and a five-year plan consistent with the Federal requirements for the Federal programs that we administer associated with affordable housing.

We use those in conjunction with the statutes to do planning for all of our state housing programs as well.

What this particular piece of legislation does is it ties the Commissioner's hands relative to the establishment of specific numerical goals both by region, which is unsupported in statute, and by topic.

We have funding further fair housing planning every five years. It's called the analysis and impediments to fair housing choice. We are currently in the middle of that planning process right now for the next five-year plan.

This particular piece of legislation would require that planning activity to occur every single year. Right now our AI is supported with the financial support of the Federal government through those Federal programs. That is, I get the planning and the Feds will pay for it.

To move it to an annual report takes it out of my ability to use my Federal administrative dollars to pay for it and there are no state dollars to pay for it on an annual basis.

In addition, the impact or the change on an annual basis would not be significant enough to warrant notice. That is, need to have time to see the change. I hope this answers your question.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): it does. It is very helpful to know. But this is in no way a suggestion that those priorities are not our priorities, it's just about the cost and taking resources away from the reporting mechanisms. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Any other comments, questions? No? Well, I do.

So I wanna talk a little bit about House Bill 5126 and that's AN ACT CONCERNING INSPECTIONS OF RENTAL PROPERTY PRIOR TO OCCUPANCY, TERMINATION, LATE RENTAL PAYMENTS, DESIGNATION OF RENTAL HOUSING OMBUDSMAN.

And I think you pretty much said that the Department was opposed to that idea of having an additional person to assist with disputes.

For me, I know on the local level a lot of our code enforcement officers and I probably can speak for a lot of folks in the room -- many municipalities are running short when it comes to having code enforcement officers whether it's because they just don't have the financial means or it may not be a priority.

But one of the things that I wanted to ask if this is something that you would reconsider. Could you -- let's just say, we're just dreaming together -- if you had the appropriate funds, and this is something your department could manage, how -- how would the housing ombudsman work with and complement existing processes for housing disputes.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: So Michael, can I -- get your help here? Just because he has the details.  
[Crosstalk]

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Yeah, it's no problem.

MICHAEL SANTORO: Thank you again. Again, Mike Santoro.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): And just stick around.

MICHAEL SANTORO: Yeah, and I'll say what my Commissioner wanted to say -- I'm old and I've been here a long time.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I didn't -- I didn't say that.

MICHAEL SANTORO: The issue here is -- the issues spelled out and the problems identified in the bill are local in nature and as you said, Representative

McGee, a lot of municipalities don't have the resources to deal with them at the local level or they are unwilling to make the commitment at the local level.

Multiply that by 169 communities. To have a single ombudsman at the state level who's trying -- who would be trying to manage leverage and facilitate complaints at 169 municipalities, escalates that exponentially.

Conceptually, I understand that having the weight, if you will, of the state to get a landlord to move may appear to be advantageous but in fact it takes away or removes -- adds another layer -- to trying to address the problem.

Personally, I think we'd be better served trying to help municipalities acquire the local capacity to deal with the local issues than trying to take it up another level and essentially taking us farther away from the problem and trying to deal with it by establishing an ombudsman.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): So okay. How would we support local municipalities -- we as in DOH? How -- what does that look like?

MICHAEL SANTORO: I don't wanna speak for the Commissioner, so -- [crosstalk].

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Through you, Commissioner. Again, we're just talking through conceptually what that would look like, what you've already stated. This is where we are, we don't wanna overstep.

Okay, fine, so how do we support local municipalities in this -- this area?

MICHAEL SANTORO: Well, there are a number of tools that could be used potentially. There's another piece of legislation not under this particular Committee dealing with uniform property maintenance code. It's [Inaudible 00:22:33] department. Supports in concept along with a number of other state agencies, state building inspectors, state fire marshal, etcetera.

So when that particular piece of legislation comes before your committee, we'd be happy to testify about that particular piece. I won't take a lot of your time on that today.

The concept here is housing is a local issue because it is a health and safety issue. Your local public health department needs to be aware of the physical conditions in your municipality. Your local building inspector needs to have control over the work that is done relative to repairs, building permitting, etcetera.

To take that up to the state level really -- it's harmful. How do we make it better, how do we help municipalities? Encourage municipalities to take that step. Advertise it for them. Give them the resources and the tools to make that happen.

There are programs that we have as a department that can help municipalities if they are willing and interested. And any municipality that wants to move forward on improving their housing code enforcement activities can and should reach out to the department.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Do you have a question? Okay, one -- one second. My last question and then I'll turn the mic over to

Representative Gonzalez -- we're gonna move to pad 129.

As you know, I've been a strong, strong proponent of figuring out how we as a state, we as a committee, provide opportunities to individuals re-entering our communities.

We know that towns or cities like New Haven have done an outstanding job with creating innovative ways of providing access to housing for formerly incarcerated.

I was surprised to read the testimony and not see any inkling, any mention, of you know, the department working to ensure -- and I know you are -- but I just wanna hear for the record, where are we on this particular conversation and are you interested in -- in having further discussion on how the department could be helpful in those conversations?

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: We are having those conversations and yes, the department will be interested in continuing those conversations.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Commissioner. Representative Gonzalez?

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Thank you. My question is about the vouchers. Housing vouchers. How that works.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: The Department has two type of -- one is the Federal vouchers that we manage. And is kind of we are a housing authority for the whole state. And those are [Inaudible 00:25:34] based vouchers and we receive the funding from the Federal government.

And then we also have the rental assistant program that we manage and those are from the state. And I think we have about a little over 6,000.

[Crosstalk]

MICHAEL SANTORO: Currently -- currently we have about 2,900 Federal vouchers and just a little under 7,000 certificates under the state rental systems program. Yes, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: And how they work, we have an administrator and they are in charge of managing the vouchers. So they have a wait list. The wait list is -- I think the last time it was opened was --

MICHAEL SANTORO: We opened the wait list three years ago. At that time we had 79,000 unduplicated applicants. We created two wait lists, one for the Section 8 housing voucher program -- one for the state rental assistance of 3,000 and 5,000 each, respectively.

When those two wait lists get down below a thousand, we will reissue or open applications again. We expect that probably in the next year-and-a-half to two years.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Did you say 79,000?

MICHAEL SANTORO: Yes.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Seventy-nine thousand.

MICHAEL SANTORO: Seventy-nine thousand. We actually had 84,000 applicants but when you take away the duplicates or the incomplete applications, it was 79,000 unduplicated applicants.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Unduplicated. And it was like you -- how many years to -- to provide all 79,000 about?

MICHAEL SANTORO: Well, I don't know that we could. I don't know that it would be appropriate that we would, necessarily. So understand, not all of those are from within the state of Connecticut.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Oh, okay. And for how long is the voucher?

MICHAEL SANTORO: As long as you need it. Once you are receiving rental assistance, whether it's state or Federal, as long as you need that assistance from an income standpoint --

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Yeah, okay.

MICHAEL SANTORO: -- you will continue to receive it.

REP. GONZALES (3RD): Okay, I'm sorry. I think that I -- it was my fault. I didn't complete that -- the question.

How long you have, you know, a person has. Let's say that you provide them a voucher. Let's say January. How long they can -- they have to look for the apartment before that voucher expires?

MICHAEL SANTORO: So depending on which of the two programs you're talking about, we -- under the Federal program -- we publish what's called the Section 8 Housing Choice Administrative Plan that gets published every year. That administrative plan is out for public comment at the moment.

And the way the Federal regulations lay it out is there is a 90-day period where we can give additional 90-day extensions which we routinely do.

We typically will give up to three extensions, depending on the specific circumstances associated with the voucher holder.

So if you understand the timeframe, you get about a year --

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): A year.

MICHAEL SANTORO: -- if you follow through with the request for extensions. On the State Rental Assistance Program it's very similar. It is not, however, statutory, it is by choice. We also publish a State Rental Assistance Administrative Manual which is slightly different than the Federal. It does not have some of the restrictions of the Federal program.

But similarly, at the start you get 90 days. If you can't find a unit in 90 days you -- all you have to do is ask for an extension. The first one is essentially automatic, that gets you out to six months.

After that, we look at the specifics of the circumstances and determine whether another extension is appropriate or not.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Okay and the reason why I asked the question is because I think that I -- that I knew the answer but I wanted to be sure.

And my problem with that is that whoever, you know, housing they are -- they are dealing with this, they're not doing what they are supposed to. Now

saying they -- you have 90 days and you have up to a year.

But I have so many complaints in my community that they try for three months, they can't find an apartment. After three months, boom, they got them out of the -- out of the list.

MICHAEL SANTORO: So, Representative, not to cut you off, let me be clear. You represent -- most of your constituents are here in Hartford, correct?

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): That's correct. And very proud of it.

MICHAEL SANTORO: If you will talk to the Hartford Housing Authority and the way they administer their vouchers. Understand, here in the state of Connecticut we are only one of 46 public housing authorities that administer vouchers.

Our program is statewide. Hartford Housing Authority administers vouchers in the city of Hartford. Their plan is very different than ours.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Okay, so -- so that means that their plan is three months, 90 days, if you can't find an apartment you're out and you guys are not involved in that? You don't make a decision on that?

MICHAEL SANTORO: I can't speak to that, you'd need to consult with them.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): So the Hartford authority has their own way to manage the vouchers? And we don't have jurisdiction because it's a Federal --

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I was gonna say, Commissioner, just for the sake of the conversation and to include

everybody, could you just please kind of explain high level the state has a portfolio, local municipalities have portfolios.

Just explain that because I think it is the perception that you all are in charge of every single housing voucher program in the state of Connecticut and you're not.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: Yes, because I do receive calls and say, "I'm calling for housing." And they're calling for the housing -- calling for Housing Authority.

So the state has the Federal housing authorities, they all manage their own vouchers. And the state has kind of another housing authority for a state-wide and we manage the vouchers and those are pretty base vouchers. So they both can take it in different places. We don't just manage the Hartford vouchers.

So there are different ways. So they have a voucher from the Housing Authority from Hartford Housing Authority, they have to go to them and they have to look at their plan and they have to look at the way that they are managing those vouchers.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): So do you think that it's possible, because if we -- I'm having problems with the one in Hartford. That -- that's a fact. I'm having problems with them the way they are doing this.

Like sometimes it's two months and before they get -- they read for two months, they said we -- "Well, sorry but, you know, you lose your Section 8." And I don't think that's fair after waiting years and

years, waiting for the vouchers and then finally they got the vouchers because they can't -- they can't find a decent apartment, you know, in three months then -- or two months sometimes -- they lose the opportunity for us -- for a voucher.

Also, you know, the other problem that I have is that they -- they move -- most of the time, these people, they are so desperate waiting for their voucher, they notify them that they moved. And they notified them new addresses.

Now, that is a problem because they said they keep waiting and waiting -- "Oh, you moved. You never notified." You know, and it's their word against these people.

Most of this happens with minority people. People that don't have the funding. People that really desperately need these vouchers and -- and I think that that's why we're here for, to help the people that really need

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: So, Representative, what I can do is I can set up a meeting with the Housing Authority in Hartford and you and I and we can meet with them and look at the way that they're doing [crosstalk].

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Listen, I would like that. If you can set up the meeting as soon as possible, just let me know, I'll be there.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: We'll do that.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): And the thing is, how can we find a way. Because you said that they worked differently.

Now, can we find a way that they all -- because I don't think that it's fair that the people in Hartford, they don't have the opportunity to wait 30, 90 days. But then let's say, nothing against New Haven or Bridgeport or whatever. Let's say in Bridgeport they are running the program better than Hartford and -- and how can we make it possible that we are like these on the same regulations that you have?

You know, I -- when you said that it's different -- again, Hartford is going really bad. It's terrible. So I think that this is going against Hartford and what I'm looking is a way, how we all can work together till we fix the problem that we have here in Hartford.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: We will set up that meeting.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Let me know, please.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: Okay.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Representative. I have one, maybe two, additional questions for you and I just kinda want to pick your brain on a particular bill.

I was figuring out -- I was trying to figure out how to put my notes in here asking Senator Anwar to help me out. And we both were kinda stumbling on this here.

But this particular bill that I have a question on is, let's see, it's the landlord -- all right, here we go. House Bill 5124 and that's AN ACT REQUIRING LANDLORDS TO NOTIFY TENANTS OF FORECLOSURE PROCEEDINGS.

I just want to pick your brain a little bit. I've witnessed, in the city of Hartford and throughout the state, individuals coming home -- renters -- coming home to their apartment to find a foreclosure notice on their fence, on the doors, what have you.

Meanwhile, they're still paying rent to the owner. And if I read this bill correctly or the proposal, it is providing a certain amount of time, notification, to the tenant about your situation as an owner.

Give me your -- give me your thoughts on that. I'm sure you've had many conversations on this. I'd just like to hear what are your -- what are your thoughts?

And I know this is legal matters, you know, with attorneys, etcetera, but given your expertise, I just -- I wanted to hear.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: Yeah, to tell you the truth, I have not read the bill.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): That's okay.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: But it was a holiday. And I think -- and I was working in the housing field, the tenants, the residents do have rights.

And what we used to do was to have them to look for legal advice and Legal Aid was in New Haven, specifically, it was very helpful to help them go through the transition because a landlord cannot just put a notice on -- and you're talking about foreclosure, right? For the banks. [Crosstalk]

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Yeah, essentially this particular bill would require landlords to notify perspective

and current tenants of foreclosure proceedings and to permit tenants to seek court appointment of a receiver upon receiving such notice.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: Do you have some information on that?

MICHAEL SANTORO: Sure, I'll speak very briefly to it. Again, we haven't had an opportunity to fully brief our Commissioner on the wide variety of bills that are out there right now.

This particular bill, relative to the notice provisions are the legislation, certainly. There's nothing in there that would be prohibitive. It would, in fact, be very helpful to tenants to have more advanced notice if a foreclosure action is occurring on a particular property.

We really can't speak to the legal aspects of -- of receivership appointment. It falls in the jurisdiction of the Judicial Department and I don't think we wanna step into those waters, if you will.

But relative to notification, I think the more you know the better and the sooner you know the better you can take action whether it's through receivership or otherwise.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Any other questions, comments? Commissioner, thank you. I know your job is tough but you are a great advocate for many of -- actually all of us in this room and even throughout the state but specifically our homeless population and those who are extremely interested in becoming homeowners, etcetera.

We thank you for your work and we'll continue -- I see you -- we'll continue to fight right alongside

you because we definitely need some more funding for the projects that you all currently have underway.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: Thank you Representative.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): So before you go, we have one other question. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Less a question but to echo what the Chairman said earlier, it's -- it's a real opportunity for the state of Connecticut to have a Commissioner that comes from a private sector experience and I have thoroughly enjoyed your perspective and your vision in creating more affordable housing and workforce housing throughout all of Connecticut.

So I appreciate your time here and I appreciate your work and I just simply wanted to take a moment to extend my appreciation and thanks for your willingness to partake in the American or Connecticut legislative process. It's a learning curve for all of us. So thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER SEILA BRUNO: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Senator Hwang. Next is the Honorable Representative Susan Johnson from the 49th District.

SENATOR JOHNSON (49TH): Good afternoon, Senator Anwar, Representative McGee and the distinguished members of the Housing Committee.

Thank you so much for the great agenda you've put forward today. I'm here to testify in support of the Senate Bill 105, 107, 108, House Bill 5118 and House Bill 5129.

Let me just say that my testimony really focuses on the coordination of the idea of the right to housing, the issues regarding homeless shelters and that is, I think, something that we should all look at in terms of the situations that we find ourselves in.

I -- I represent the town of Windham and we have three homeless shelters in my district. We have one, Holy Family Shelter for families. We also have a No Freeze shelter that is open between April and -- November, rather, and April. And we also have a domestic violence shelter.

We also have more public housing and subsidized housing on a per capita basis than any other place in the state of Connecticut except for Hartford.

So we do take care of the people who need housing. The problem is, is that we are unable to address all the housing needs and it's creating a great deal of difficulty in my district.

As creating, of course, even more difficulty for people who are in a situation where they can't obtain housing. And I really do especially think about the transitional housing that's proposed in 5129 because when you take a look at those -- those different things and the task force that you want to address some of these issues in. I just want to give you a couple of things that I think that maybe should be added to the list of the task force.

And that is people in my district, where we have the No Freeze shelter that's open from November to April are in a situation where they have -- I've found people with developmental disabilities in the shelter. People who are in recovery from addiction.

People who are not in recovery from addiction and people with rather severe mental health disorders. All in a small area of say 30 to 40 beds and sometimes sleeping in chairs and so on and so forth just to be able to stay in from the cold.

When the shelter's closed in April, a lot of -- they're handed tents and people are given tents to go out and live by the river or wherever else they can find a spot. Sometimes they have located themselves in or right next to people's back yards.

So they can set a tent up there and this has created a -- quite a stir in the area. So people are very concerned.

First of all, I have a community that really wants to make sure that people are housed. On the other hand, you want to find a safe and decent place for them.

Just recently, in this -- in this particular year for when the -- when the No Freeze shelter opened, one of the -- the owner of the buildings which is located in kind of a shopping plaza. The brother who is of the owner who maintains the building was attacked by one of the shelter residents which created a real problem in terms of keeping them -- first, keeping the shelter there and which they had wanted to move anyway. Move the shelter out.

But also created a problem in terms of people fearing shelter residents as well. Which brings us to the situation of what we need to do when we study these circumstances for people in these temporary living arrangements.

First of all, if you put people with behavioral health disorders and people who are violent and people who are in a situation where they have addiction. And people who are in a situation where they are recovering from addiction all in one small place.

It's very, very hard for the people who are recovering to try and continue to revert. It's very hard for people who are addicted to try and recover and go through the recovery programs.

But it's also difficult because we don't have skilled people. We don't have nurses and doctors and social workers really there day and night to help people out with their problems. So if a problem occurs, we don't necessarily have a professional staff person there like you would in a behavioral health facility, for example.

Yet we're using these places as behavioral health facilities. And they are designated as -- for public health -- so in terms of the designation for the shelter as far as zoning is concerned, they are designated as in public health areas in our zoning regulations.

So they would have to be, you know, in a public health area or an area where it would not be considered residential area.

And this also brings to mind the problem of our sex offenders being discharged to the shelters as well. And when they are -- when they are discharged from the -- you know, their incarceration -- into these shelters, if they are located anywhere near a daycare center or located anywhere near say a, you know, a junior high school or a high school, then

they are going to be in a situation where they are increasing the risk of having our young people attacked, perhaps, and -- and this has actually happened in my district where about 20 years ago a young girl, an 11-year-old papergirl was -- was brutally killed by some sex offenders in her neighborhood.

So we need to keep control over that. We have probably on a per capita basis very large population of sex offenders who are renting. In terms of moving in and out of these situations, transitional housing for sex offenders before they're released into a community, into a stable environment. It should be a real serious consideration.

I know they have them in Montville but I think that maybe all -- all of these -- this population should actually be in the situation where we're taking careful control over the fact that they are being transitioned and we know that when people offend, it's probably with an increase of stress.

We have an increase in stress, what would happen is there may be a reversion back into behaviors that are not acceptable. And we wanna make sure that when people are discharged from prison facilities, that they're discharged into circumstances that release the stress, that give them an opportunity to transition into society and make sure they have the behavioral health services that they need.

Be sure that they have the educational opportunities that they need. Make sure that they receive the different types of things that -- that will help them become functional members in our society.

So, for those reasons and that -- and that's kind of just a brief overview of some of the circumstances that I think the task force should take a look at when they look at the shelters.

I also wanted to speak in favor of open choice vouchers. Senate Bill 108. That is a bill that is really something that will be a very positive thing for us. We have the most economically and racially segregated cities in the country and we need to be able to desegregate our -- our housing situation.

We have all this de facto segregation now. We need to move out of that and move into integrating our regions more thoroughly, economically and with respect to housing.

So those are some of the things -- finally, security systems House Bill 5118 -- that is also something that I have a real problem with in terms of a lot of the housing authorities to follow up a little bit with Representative Gonzalez's issues trying to make the idea of the state housing authorities more in compliance with some of the security things.

I have a high-rise -- two high-rise senior housing complexes that has probably, let's see, it's about -- it's 160 units in all.

And so we have a problem a couple of years ago and this has not been solved yet. One of the housing authority tenants was murdered in his -- in his room. In his apartment, rather. And the idea of having -- having more security, making sure the doors lock.

Some of the housing that we have doesn't have that kind of security. I think all -- all the subsidized

housing facilities should have better security. They should've been -- it should've been required when they were building them but those are some of the things that should be required and perhaps funded. Maybe it's something that we could provide some bonding money for to make sure that the -- that these places have the right cameras, number of cameras. The right kind of security at the door. Some do, some don't and so anyway.

But thank you for really comprehensive agenda and your work.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): We have a couple questions. So Representative Gonzalez.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, Representative Johnson, I think that you're facing some problems in Willimantic and I think that we are facing almost the same problems and we, you know, in Hartford.

What -- you had stated that you have some -- some -- some people that goes looking for shelter with mental issues. Yeah, I think we have that also here in Hartford. But you just said that you have some social workers, right? Working -- you have social workers working and helping or you don't have no social worker?

SENATOR JOHNSON (49TH): Yes, thank you for clarification. No, people who are running the homeless shelter are not necessarily social workers, they're very concerned citizens.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Oh, okay.

SENATOR JOHNSON (49TH): They have people who are trying to place people in housing, trying to find

healthcare for them. They're trying to do a lot of those types of work but they're not -- they're not -- it's not required that they be a social worker or that we've had social workers in those positions. And I don't believe the current person that's running the homeless shelter is a social worker either.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Okay, so I agree with you that we need professional social workers working at the shelters because I think that the system thinks that -- well, they are homeless people, who cares, you know, if it is a professional person that is trying to help or not.

And I think that it is wrong. It is real wrong because these people that got mental issues and it's a problem when you don't know how to deal with this problem and you're not a professional social worker. So I kinda agree with you on that.

The other -- do you have an idea in your shelters, if you have more -- more inmates that are being released from corrections than regular people?

SENATOR JOHNSON (49TH): I believe that most of -- many, many are being released from correctional facilities so there's a large portion of people in my homeless shelters that are from correctional facilities.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Okay.

SENATOR JOHNSON (49TH): And -- and the other thing I forgot to mention is that they leave them outside all day in the No Freeze shelters. So they're outside all day in the winter which is if you're sick, if you're in a situation where you have a

behavioral health disorder, being outside all day is not helpful, I don't believe either. And so it -- and they walk from the shelter to the soup kitchen.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Yeah, I agree with you. But on the other hand, there's like they say, they talk with both sides of their mouth because now we're getting people from other countries receiving people, helping people when in reality we have -- I think that we should start taking care of the people that we have here right now. They are American citizens, I think that we should take care of them.

But we have the same problem, I think that corrections -- they release people to the shelters. We've got people here in Hartford, they never lived in Hartford before. But they released them to shelters and they say, "Let Hartford take care of this."

And some of these people, they leave like let's say Waterbury, Willimantic, people that are not from this area. And I believe that maybe you're dealing with the same problems that you have to go, they leave them -- they release them in Willimantic. That's going all over.

I think that it's something that we should sit down, put a group of people together that are willing to help and see if we can meet with the Department of Corrections. Because we've been telling them, "Don't release people -- don't release inmates that -- that live in Hartford, don't release them in Hartford." And that's not only because that's like we're dealing only with the Hartford people -- no. We're dealing with people from all over. They release them here in Hartford.

So I think that maybe -- maybe we sit down, maybe a few of us, and trying to find out, maybe a solution to this with the Department of Corrections. I think that would be very -- even though that I'd be meeting with them and also [Inaudible 00:54:01]. We've been asking them, please don't -- don't do that, you know.

Because I think that if they be -- if they may be released, Corrections -- Department of Corrections should let them know in advance so that way they can have a member of the family picking them up. That way they don't have to release them, you know, somewhere else where they don't belong. Or maybe where they -- you know, they don't have no family, they don't know anybody.

So I think that's an issue that maybe we can sit down with the Department of Transportation and -- or Corrections -- and maybe we can discuss that.

SENATOR JOHNSON (49TH): That would be wonderful. Also I would include the Housing Commissioner as well because I think that the combination of Housing Commissioner and Department of Corrections, I think that the -- the other thing is, is that many times I've talked in Appropriations about this circumstance and how people are being discharged from incarceration and not having any place to go.

And this current Commissioner is actually interested in making sure that that works so the Department of Housing and the Commissioner of Corrections would be a good place to start. In the past they haven't had that.

The other thing that I've been looking into for the last two years is what's going on? How come they

are being discharged to a -- to another town?  
Sometimes they don't wanna go back to their town so  
that -- that is a problem.

Also, when they're being discharged to a family  
member, sometimes the family member can't have them.  
Why? Because they're in public housing. Public  
housing has rules about that.

So if it's federally or state subsidized housing,  
they don't allow them back in once they've been  
incarcerated. So anybody with a criminal record  
cannot go back into that type of housing.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Yeah, but the members of the  
family of -- the correction system that'll decide  
that. If they don't wanna go back to -- let's say  
they don't wanna come back to Hartford, they don't  
wanna go back to Bridgeport, they don't have -- in  
my opinion, I think that the system shouldn't decide  
where are we gonna drop this inmate because --  
because we don't wanna go that far or because they  
don't wanna go back.

I think that they should -- they got arrested, let's  
say in Hartford and they live in Hartford, they  
should be released to Hartford. If they was  
arrested in Waterbury and they live in Waterbury,  
they got the family there. That's not -- that's not  
the decision -- that's not corrections department,  
it's not their decision, you know, where they gonna  
release this inmate.

And I think that this is something that we should --  
that's why I'm saying -- but if we can set up a  
meeting and if we can invite a couple of people to  
this meeting and try to see how we can work this

out, maybe we will help -- really, what I'm thinking, maybe Willimantic is gonna help Hartford.

Let's find a way how we can try to resolve this problem because it is a problem that everybody's complaining about.

SENATOR JOHNSON (49TH): I'd be very glad to work with you on that. One other thought, though, about this whole thing. When you discharge them back into the community with a family member, if they're being discharged back into the community and the family member can't really have that person back in for violence reasons, for -- you know, there should be some type of contract.

They should have a contract with the family member about, you know, just like a lease that they should have. And that way there's authority and there are things that are outlined in terms of the behavior that they will have to abide by if they're going to live in the house with a family member.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): I agree.

SENATOR JOHNSON (49TH): So just a thought, anyway.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Okay.

SENATOR JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. I just have one comment, not a question. I appreciate the conversation that both you and Representative Gonzalez are having, it's an important one. I would just add to it, with respect to Senate Bill 107, this came up out of a conversation that we had -- a

roundtable discussion with a lot of homeless -- homeless advocates and providers.

And we got on this conversation of, you know, folks being turned around because of background checks. And being denied access to shelters because of a DUI, perhaps. Some small -- very small crime. They didn't have access to the shelter, right? That's a difficult one.

The other one was transgender youth being isolated from the main sort of area of a shelter and -- and shelters not having the capacity or even the experience on how to handle some of those situations.

I could rattle off 19 other concerns that many of the advocates had which we thought it would be appropriate to really bring together a group of people to kinda talk through all of these concerns and come up with some sort of a resolution to get partners, providers, advocates at the table to address them.

And I think this last conversation that you all are having should be a part of that as well. So thank you so much, Representative, for your work and what you're doing and we look forward to working with you. Thanks.

SENATOR JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much and thank you for this great agenda and all your work and I look forward to working with you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. So this concludes the hour for all of our elected officials, agencies, legislators. We're gonna move into our public

speaker signup. And first up we have Lou Mota representing Representative Joe Gresko.

And again, each of you will have three minutes. We do have a timer but I will gently remind you to provide us with closing remarks. And you know, sometimes we can ask a question that would allow for you to elaborate a little bit more on your thoughts, so. Make it pretty concise. It's all yours.

Yeah, Lou, turn the light on.

LOU MOTA: I'm here, Representative Joe Gresko. On behalf of Representative Gresko, Chairman McGee, Senator Anwar and ranking members Zullo and Hwang.

On behalf of Connie Johnson, a constituent, I am in full support of House Bill 5124. House Bill 5124, AN ACT REQUIRING LANDLORDS TO NOTIFY TENANTS OF FORECLOSURE PROCEEDINGS.

Ms. Johnson, her wish is to prevent families from facing the hardship like she endured. This bill would require full disclosure to a perspective tenant by a landlord of a pending foreclosure on a property being rented.

In 2017, Ms. Johnson entered into a rental agreement at a property that was foreclosed and was subsequently ignored by her landlord for all of her requests for proper maintenance. She received none.

Next was in the auction sign in front of her property. Now after much legal wrangling, my constituent has found an alternative place to live but not before court proceedings that would have been unnecessary if the landlord had disclosed the property was in foreclosure.

Connecticut's Tenant Bill of Rights would be improved if the included disclosing foreclosure proceedings on a property being rented. Not too much to ask in other Representatives' opinion.

Transparency and a legal agreement is paramount and that should include tenants being notified of pending foreclosure on the property that they will call home.

My name is Louis Mota and I will take any questions from the panel.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Mr. Mota. I just want to make sure -- I mentioned this as well and I got the testimony from -- read the testimony from Representative Gresko but also from Connie Johnson herself, as well, and then I had a chance to read her story. Pretty concerning story.

So I wanted to make sure anybody else has any questions? Seeing none, thank you so much for your testimony and your message. Thank you.

LOU MOTA: Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): And the next person is Emily Perisco, represents Yale Law School.

EMILY PERISCO: Good afternoon. My name is Emily Persico, and I am a member of the Community and Economic Development Clinic at Yale Law School.

I'm testifying in support of H.B. 5121, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN PROTECTIONS FOR GROUP AND FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES.

In our work with All Our Kin, we have seen child care providers struggle to hold onto their

businesses as they face uncertainty, discrimination and eviction.

Here's a statement from just one provider who could not be here today. "Please do not close the doors on us because we are family child care providers." She says, "We are licensed by the state, we are educated and many of us have insurance. We provide a safe, loving space for young children."

Connecticut child care providers should not find themselves in this position. In the face of a child care crisis, licensed child care businesses face uncertainties and artificial barriers that keep them from maintaining or expanding their care to other children.

Zoning authorities and landlords impose unreasonable and often improvised barriers that discriminate against child care providers across the state.

Providers invest substantial time, money and energy in preparing their business and receiving appropriate health and safety licensing from the state but too often they find that they cannot proceed because of municipal or landlord disapproval. This comes to the expense of working parents, children and women entrepreneurs.

We've reviewed and cited current policies in other states that allowed for the appropriate protection of home-based child care and the people they serve.

What my colleagues and I have found is that better policy does exist that is effective in creating change for families and providers and that H.B. 5121 would advance Connecticut one step farther towards adequate protection of home based child care.

Washington, California, Oregon, Minnesota, New York -- these are just some of the states that protect group child care homes from local zoning restrictions.

In Connecticut, H.B. 5121 would extend much-needed protections for home based child care. In doing so, our state would join others across the country at the forefront of reducing red tape for these invaluable service providers.

In a similar vein, other states also protect child care homes from discrimination against landlords. New York courts have repeatedly found that landlords in condominium associations may not prohibit home based child care.

California bans any restricted vision where they did to real property from group child homes imposed orally and/or by conduct. This includes all -- should I stop? Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Well, let me ask you a question.

EMILY PERSICO: Yep.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): So first I want to make a comment. I think your written testimony is phenomenal. It's very well written. You're in law school, I presume, or you've finished law school?

EMILY PERSICO: I'm actually at the Forestry School, but yeah.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay. It's very well written and it's very helpful so I want to thank you for that and I would -- if it's okay, I would love to

have you wrap up in about another 30 seconds or so if there's something that you'd like to add.

EMILY PERISCO: Yeah, of course. Thank you very much. I'll just read the closing statement. So despite Connecticut's stated goal of providing a regulated safe and accessible child care market, child care homes currently face barriers that make it costly and sometimes impossible to open or maintain child care homes in parts of the state.

Today I've come to encourage you to pass legislation that provides strong statutory safeguards for home based child care, following the suits of other states across the country and making Connecticut a model for others to follow.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much. Thank you. Does anyone have any questions? Yes, Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (26TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your testimony and -- and here in this bill last year there was -- there was a consensus in this body that there was a tremendous need for child care resources and support to allow opportunities for parents to be able to go to work and not worry about the wellbeing of their children.

And there is a tremendous need. I think one of the key questions is -- the key phrases you said about local zoning ordinances. Could you elaborate a little bit more from your testimony about the artificial obstacles? Could you cite a couple that -- that is a challenge to meet that goal?

EMILY PERSICO: Yeah, so the Brookings Institute actually found that Connecticut has the most

restrictive zoning laws when it comes to child care in the country.

And so some of these restrictions include asking for special permits and oftentimes these special permits are basically tools that are used to ban child care -- home based child care -- from places.

So we have another story but that'll be read later by someone who did all they could to try to meet the special primary requirements and was still denied in the end.

So it's laws like these in states all -- or cities all over the country. Or state. Sorry.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And are these -- these aren't zoning ordinances, these are permitting ordinances. Are they related to local, state or Federal? These are permitting processes and obstacles. Are they state permitting?

EMILY PERSICO: No, so the special -- so the child care providers are licensed by the state and the special permit comes from the zoning office and is a requirement from the municipality.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): That's interesting and -- and they have been holding up permitting approval in addition to the zoning challenges? And what's their rationale for that? Is it a quality assurance issue? Is it a standards issue? Because obviously as much as we have dramatic needs, I think we have such challenges in ensuring that child care is of the utmost priority for parents that drop off their kids that the standards are kept and safety concerns are addressed.

How do you balance that from a challenge that, you know, you drop off your kids there, you wanna be sure that it's licensed, certified and that every -- every action is taken to ensure the safety of a child at a -- at a nursing center that they're gonna be safe. How do you ensure that? How do you kinda balance that with the challenge of the ordinances you're talking about?

EMILY PERSICO: That's a really good question. So the Office of Early Childhood actually licenses all these providers and they ensure that there's proper health and safety and that all those requirements are met.

On the local side, usually what issues are raised is more concern from neighbors that there might be noise or maybe concern that there's not enough parking. That it might cause some congestion.

So these are the type of questions that are usually raised at the local level. All health and safety requirements are already met at this point. Once a child care provider has been licensed by the state.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): So I'm -- just to be clear, so there are two points we're talking about here. One is local zoning as it relates to parking, road traffic density and the overall local zoning ordinances that you have to overcome.

What you also shared with this committee is the other facet of the licensure challenges and obstacles. Would that be fair?

EMILY PERSICO: Yeah, yeah. Yes, and we don't wanna change the licensing. We don't think that's an

obstacle. Well, we think it's a necessary kind of obstacle. It's to provide for health and safety.

So we're not trying to change that at all, we wanna kind of address the -- the barrier that comes at the local level which is not from professionals who deal with child care, it's from people who are concerned about local issues. Local -- they're concerned about parking or other things like that. Of that nature.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): You shared earlier that there's tremendous need and it's obviously you have -- you have evidentiary information related to that tremendous need.

So we have the Office of Early Education. Child Development. Former Senator Bye is a terrific director of it.

Now if we're able to kind of expand on this, do you anticipate a growth in obligations and in certification requirements and evaluations -- do you see that there's an increased bureaucratic cost in regard to licensure and certification that entails in this?

I'm just thinking from a cost-basis from state government. Do you see an increase appropriation need of this such growth?

EMILY PERSICO: Yeah, so the providers have to pay a fee when they receive their licenses. So that fee should cover most of those costs that would arise from it. And then result in more child care for Connecticut families.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): So it's -- so what you're saying is it's less state incurring the cost but the

potential child care facilities with increased licensure costs, that should cover these expenses.

EMILY PERSICO: Not increased licensure costs, just the same cost that they have been paying but potentially more providers would be paying those costs then they'd have more opportunity to create those businesses.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, I'm just curious and I think -- I think you raise a very interesting point in regards to a potential fiscal note on this proposed bill and I find that interesting and I'm here to take a look at that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, thank you very much for your testimony.

EMILY PERSICO: Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Senator Hwang. Again, Ms. Persico, I'm sorry I mispronounced your name initially but thank you so much. You're good.

Next on our list is Will Poff-Webster for Yale Law School.

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: Chairman Anwar, Chairman McGee, and members of the Housing Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm here with Emily and with the Community of Economic Development Clinic at Yale Law School.

My name is Will Poff-Webster and I am a first year law student so thank you for having me.

Our clinic has represented All Our Kin to help develop H.B. 5121, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN PROTECTIONS FOR GROUP AND FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES, and I am here to urge you to support H.B. 5121.

Anyone who's raised a child while working a job or talked to parents who have knows that we have a child care crisis. Child care in Connecticut as Senator Hwang just so eloquently put it, is a crisis because it can cost more than college tuition or housing.

Quite simply, many of our residents can't afford to raise the next generation because child care is out of reach.

A major solution to this crisis is home-based family and group child care. Home-based providers take care of kids in their community and are 30 percent more affordable than larger centers.

All that stands in the way of home-based child care is misconceived red tape and obstructionism. Connecticut -- this legislature -- passed laws in 1987 and 1990 to reduce these barriers and promote home-based child care but some obstacles still remain.

Our clinic has heard heartbreaking stories over the years of livelihoods destroyed and communities denied child care because they lack simple protections. Licensed providers just want the freedom to take care of kids in their community.

H.B. 5121 can end the impediments from landlords and local red tape that we just spoke about that make our child care crisis worse. These barriers are redundant, as we just talked about, when the Office of Early Childhood is already rigorously vetting providers.

The Office of Early Childhood has a 70-item checklist for health and safety that ensures home-

based care has everything from the appropriate square footage for every child, which you could consider a zoning concern -- to the right staffing for health and safety.

H.B. 5121 places child care decisions where they belong, in the hands of the families who need options and the experts who ensure that those options are high-quality.

And let me just lay out three of the major things this bill does. The three things it does are it extends zoning protections to group child care under section 8-3j. Currently family child care is covered but not group child care which is a slightly larger number of children for a business that's seeking to expand.

It ensures that towns follow the existing law in 8-2 which requires that both family and group child cares be allowed in every community in Connecticut.

It prohibits special permits and has self-reporting for those towns. And then finally, it ensures that licensed child care homes aren't shut down by landlords.

And that concludes my testimony. Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you. Do you wanna stay for a second? I want to make sure --

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: Absolutely.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Does anybody have any questions? Yes, Representative McGee.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you so much for the work that you all do down at Yale in the clinic and I've had an opportunity to

work with you all for the past two-and-a-half years. So the work that you do is actually -- it's phenomenal.

So I'm definitely in support of House Bill 5121. I've asked this of the Commissioner and I'm gonna ask you the same question and maybe you have some information that you could share with the Committee.

Do we know how many towns currently have zoning regulations against group and family child care homes?

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: So I think that's an excellent question, Chairman McGee. I think the challenge is that in fact many of the zoning regulations that are actually on the books are illegal under state law under Section 8-2.

So the way that we've attempted to deal with this as a clinic is that when a child care provider comes to us and says, "My town is requiring this permit of me, I'm a family child care", we're able to contact the town and say, "That's actually not allowed under state law."

And we've had some success with that but unfortunately that's a -- that's a case-by-case solution. That doesn't solve this overall. So because some of those restrictions are illegal, we don't have an overall sense. But we've been trying to do it case-by-case and we think that this bill would help address it in a more comprehensive way.

But I -- I can tell you that there's a recent study from the American Enterprise Institute that reports that 44 percent of Connecticut communities don't

have sufficient child care. They're what's classified as a child care desert.

And so that's a real challenge because we -- we don't have sufficient child care. Those are primarily suburban and rural communities that would especially benefit from the smaller child care that we're talking about here.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you -- oh, you have one more question. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you very much. Your testimony was -- was concise and very impressive. And -- and I'd like to ask some particulars.

Why in Connecticut are we limited to six versus New York at ten? And California at 14?

And the second part of that question is do we have statutes protecting group child care from zoning restrictions in Massachusetts and Rhode Island?

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: So thank you for the question, Senator Hwang. Most of the states we've looked at -- the states my colleague Emily spoke about earlier -- they have to categories for home-based child care. They have a smaller category which we in Connecticut call family child care up to six here up to maybe seven or eight in a few other states.

And then they have a slightly larger category that we call group child care which is up to 12. In California, they do up to 14. This is to acknowledge that child care in this size is something that's a family affair. That typically

occurs in the home. It's not a large child care center that you'd see on a main street, it's a much more residential activity.

So that's that kind of distinction between the larger and smaller categorizations there. And with respect to other states, we specifically looked at New York and California and their rules say that up to that 12 or 14 child, the smaller residential category, whether it's group or family child care, those are the folks that we wanna make sure are able to operate in residential areas.

So in Connecticut we still restrict it to just the family child care up to six. But we believe that as other states have done, we should go up to a slightly larger threshold to allow all residential child cares to operate in our communities.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): So what I'm understanding is, current statute in Connecticut allows kind of a home-based, you know, child care where a grandparent may be watching their grandchildren and add two or three other children up to a limit of six.

And our state statutes and local zoning pretty much allows that. Would that be correct?

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: That's correct.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And what 5121 is looking to do is expand beyond that to allow larger group child care facilities to be able to have that protected exemption against local zoning ordinances. Would that be correct?

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: So that's -- that's mostly correct. Just to be clear, Section 8-2 in the Connecticut statutes already protects both group and

family child care and says that has to be allowed in every community.

But what 8-2 also does is it says that a group child care, that seven to 12 children category, a town can put in place special permits or special requirements.

And what we've seen in practice, unfortunately, is that many towns use that to intentionally zone out group child care. They don't allow it at all.

We've had examples of people who have tried many different locations in the same town and they continually get denied for that slightly larger group child care. And often these are folks who already have a business. They've had a family child care and they're trying to take on a few extra kids as they get to know their community better.

So that's what we're trying to focus on. Group and family child care already protected in Connecticut state-wide but we want to expand the protections as you said -- expand the protections for group child care to be the same as we have for family child care.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you and you know, I'm so impressed by our students in our school systems and your articulation.

But I also wanted, through the Chair, ask LCO in regards to their interpretation of 8.2 and -- and indeed, if that is a clarification of how our current statute is interpreted. To -- to afford larger group healthcare organizations that you're talking about. That they are afforded the same protection that you just articulated.

And if indeed that is a statutory, I appreciate the clarification but I'm gonna, through you Mr. Chair, ask LCO to give their interpretation of that and -- and if there is a distinction, I'd like to be able to have that into the testimony record.

Through you, Mr. Chair, to the LCO.

SENATOR ANWAR (28TH): Yes, yes, please go ahead.

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: I should just say, if I may, this also references 8-3J, that's the other statute that's being referenced, so it could be another one.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): [Inaudible 01:21:33] I feel like I'm in judiciary. But I appreciate you raising the point. Thank you.

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: Your questions are better than I get in law school, Senator.

[Background conversation]

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): I'm appreciative of -- of your work and all of your colleagues' work. It's -- it's such a noble and engaged effort. So I applaud you and this is what public testimony is all about and I appreciate that.

So while we're waiting for the LCO, I appreciate the kind words.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): So what I'll do is actually -- okay. I can probably ask you a quick question. Now I read through the other testimonies from the people who are against this bill. And their argument is that this bill would put a condo association at a risk. Exposure would be high for ADA and other reasons.

How do you read that?

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: Yeah, well thank you for the question, we've also been looking at the testimony.

The intent in H.B. 5121 is not to include condo associations. I know that would -- this bill went through last year and there was some productive discussions with condo associations.

So the intent behind the bill is not to affect the function of condo associations and we've actually been in conversations with them today to make sure that the bill language does that.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you.

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Actually we have Representative Rose who has a question.

REP. ROSE (118TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much for being here and I echo the sentiments of our Senator of your thoughtful testimony.

As you were going through this scenario, if I wanted to open up a family daycare with 12 children -- so am I gonna be subject to like building code requirements as far as how many bathrooms, handwashing sinks -- how is that -- how would that affect this bill?

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: That's a great question, thank you, Representative.

So one of the reasons I said that the Office of Early Childhood's licensing procedure in effect replaces the local zoning, we don't really need

redundant local zoning requirements is because the Office of Early Childhood has this extremely rigorous and developed procedure.

It includes requirements around fire safety, number of exits, usable program square footage per child. So for instance, if you have a very small apartment, you're not gonna be able to have 12 children. You might be able to have seven or eight in a -- in a medium size apartment. You're not gonna be able to go up to that maximum.

So there's a lot of those requirements both in terms of the physical layout and physical requirements of the space and also in terms of number of staff, training of staff that the Office of Early Childhood implements.

They've got extremely long checklists for childhood folks to look at. So there's a lot in there.

REP. ROSE (118TH): Thank you very much, I didn't want this to muck up this bill.

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: Absolutely, thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (106TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. [Clears throat] Thank you for coming up and sharing your knowledge today, we appreciate that.

Unfortunately, I walked in in the middle of your testimony so I just wanted to make sure I understand what you're saying with this bill. And I haven't had a chance to go through the testimony yet.

Would this allow a -- whether it's a group home or a child care -- to be placed in a residential neighborhood to run and operate a business in a

residential neighborhood? Is that what this is doing?

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: So, in fact, Representative, thank you for the question. Since 1987, Connecticut has had a statute that allows family and group child care to operate in residential neighborhoods.

And the rationale behind that is that this is not a traditional commercial business like a store of some kind. Children are already in our neighborhoods so that's where residential child care typically takes place. I actually went to one as a kid myself.

And -- and yet there, of course, need to be some restrictions to make sure that it's an appropriate environment for children. And so that's where the Office of Early Childhood comes in.

But yes, I suppose you could think of it as a business. These are small business owners who are trying to start a small business to take care of kids in their community.

REP. SMITH (106TH): And under this proposed bill, what would the number of children be?

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: So currently we have two categories. We have family child care and we have group child care and they're both permitted in any residential area under current Connecticut law. What this would say is that family child care up to six children and the group child care up to 12 children gets treated the same. They both are permitted.

REP. SMITH (106TH): So would they both be allowed up to 12 then?

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: Yes, but I think the key point here is that in current existing Connecticut law, they're already allowed in residential areas. The question is just are they able to operate safely, securely, without interference from landlords or others to make sure that they can take care of kids in the neighborhood.

REP. SMITH (106TH): And is there any restriction in terms of the number of staff that would be allowed to actually handle these children?

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: Yes, absolutely, and that's an important part of it. So the Office of Early Childhood's regulations require a particular ratio between the number of trained adults and the number of children they're allowed in the child care home.

And that ratio varies between if you're taking care of a four-year-old, you don't need quite as many adults. If you're taking care of younger children, you need them more significantly, sometimes even two to one.

So there's some significant requirements to make sure that we have a lot of adults that are able to take care of the kids.

For a family child care, you might have -- if it's just a few kids you might have one adult who runs it. For a larger group child care you have multiple adults.

REP. SMITH (106TH): So let's take it if the perspective of if you have ratios that are required and you have a number of students -- children -- who are there and a number of staff members who are there, and the traffic then, in the residential

neighborhood and the parking and commercial vehicles coming out, dropping off supplies, etcetera.

So I understand by statutes it's allowed. It's in every community and it's welcome in every community as well. I would hope. But I think there is a balance that needs to be considered by the Committee and -- in terms of what's safe for the neighborhood while encouraging that these facilities be allowed and families can actually raise their children and other children within their homes and have a business.

So I think it's a fine line but I do think we have to be cognizant of some other traffic and impacts that would affect the neighborhood as well.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Representative Smith and we are now waiting for more information? Do you think we can do this offline later or --

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): That being, Mr. Chair, and in talking with LCO briefly, I think it is one of the interesting topic matters that this committee will have to evaluate in regards to a clear definition of -- of the interpretation of home-based healthcare versus larger commercial --

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): You mean child care.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Or group child care facilities. I think the second part is also following up -- I'm reading through former Senator Beth Bye's testimony. She had also encouraged a clarification of those two definitions.

And I know that in this committee we have taken up looking at some of the definitional terms that would allow us to kind of bypass the uncertainty and what

may be seen as artificial obstacles to our community's perceive. Or real.

So I appreciate your testimony and I hope we'll engage some more and -- and I appreciate the Committee for raising this important issue. And I do agree, we do have a child care crisis and that we need to readily address it and let's make sure it's no longer silent as you wrote in your testimony.

And if I may also ask, I'd like to extend myself a visit to your clinic to find out the good work that you all do on a first hand basis. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you. And I think your smile said maybe. [Laughter]

WILL POFF-WEBSTER: Thank you, we'd love to have you and we'd love to continue the conversation. Thank you so much.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you. So then what I heard is if you support this, there's an opportunity. [Laughter] Just saying. [Background conversation]

Next up is Mr. Richard Cho who is with Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. Thank you, Richard.

RICHARD CHO: Good afternoon, Senator Anwar, Representative McGee and other distinguished members of the Housing Committee.

My name is Richard Cho, I'm actually here testifying with two hats. One is as the CEO of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness where we represent about 100 members who are working collectively to end homelessness in our state as well as the former

Chair of the Housing Subcommittee for the Council on the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record which is a body created by this legislature in the last session through H.B. 6921.

I'll be testifying on three bills here -- S.B. 109 and H.B. 5122 which both have to do with how landlords can use criminal records to screen prospective tenants. And then also on H.B. 529 (sic), AN ACT CONCERNING A TRANSITION PROGRAM FOR INCARCERATED PERSONS BEING RELEASED FROM PRISON.

So first with regard to S.B. 109 and H.B. 522, I want to applaud this committee for your leadership in elevating attention on this issue.

People with criminal records face extreme barriers to housing but experiencing homelessness is one of the top areas that they face and being able to obtain housing in the community is the fact that they have a criminal record.

I wanna support the intent of both bills and applaud the committee for your attempts to address this problem. But I also wanna urge you to consider the work that we did over the last several months through the Council on the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record where we worked together with a broad coalition.

Many of the folks who were represented in this room, both from people with lived experience of incarceration, re-entry advocates as well as people who represent the housing sector, the Coalition of Property Owners, the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Housing Redevelopment Officials, the Department of Housing, the Apartment Association for the state, Connecticut Realtors.

All were represented on the subcommittee and we were able to achieve a near consensus policy recommendation for how we could strike a balance between being able to reduce housing denials for people based on their criminal record while also giving landlords tools to be able to mitigate some of their risk.

We believe that actually of the two bills, H.B. 5122 is more closely aligned with our council's policy and we think that with some modifications that bill could actually be a vehicle for actually advancing the policy recommendations that the Council on the Collateral Consequences recommended, specifically where we would not only provide some limits on the lookback period and prevent landlords from blanketly denying people on the base of a criminal record but also operationalizing an individualized assessment that requires landlords, when they want to consider denying housing based on a particular conviction, to really review other mitigating factors such as how long has been since that conviction happened, the age at the time of the offense and also evidence of rehabilitation or good employment.

Without going through all of those in detail, we did submit to this committee a side-by-side comparison of the council's final recommendations with H.B. 5122 and we also worked with the New Haven Legal Assistance over the President's Day weekend to try to align those bills and we forgot to mark up.

If I could just quickly mention 5129, you know, I also wanna applaud this committee for elevating attention on the number of people who are being discharged to homelessness from the Department of Corrections. It's an issue that we work with on --

over the last year. We conducted a data match, we found that there are 3,562 people over the last three years who used homeless shelters who were recently released from Department of Corrections.

What I want the committee to consider is -- is not to have the Department of Corrections have to funnel clients through the two-and-one system but rather that we provide DOC as well as Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch with the tools and resources to be able to proactively address housing needs, identify people who are behind bars, who are facing homelessness and then to be able to contract out to provide housing navigation, rental assistance and case management for those individuals.

Later today you'll hear testimony from Columbus House who is actually piloting a Rapid Rehousing program that is funded by Court Support Services Division as well as the Department of Housing. And you'll hear from both a case manager as well as a current resident of that program and it's -- it's showing that it's not only successful in keeping people stably housed after a term of incarceration but also really contributing to public safety.

So thank you very much. I'll take your questions.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much, Mr. Cho, again for your written testimony and the work that you and your organization has been doing for a long time.

I'm -- can I ask a quick question on 5122? I think some of -- many of the landlords have some concerns about it. Could you try and explain in your words as an advocate for addressing homelessness and in

with this bill how the landlords are -- concerns are -- are not as significant as they may feel and then can you help us understand that?

RICHARD CHO: Well, yeah, I'm actually surprised by the opposition from landlords because we had a number of landlord and housing provider organizations represented on the subcommittee and their job was to get the sense of their own associations on what the -- what an actual policy would be.

And we did achieve almost a consensus on the idea that no, a landlord should not blanketly discriminate people on the basis of a criminal record but they should still have some ability to screen people on the base of a criminal record but really look at when their convictions are relevant to whether somebody's gonna be a good tenant or not.

I think we actually came up with a good policy around that. I think there's a lot of misperceptions out there from landlords who may not have been part of that process in understanding what 5122 and with the modified version of 5122 could be which is that it's not trying to just blanketly say you may not ever look up somebody's criminal record or that you have to house somebody that has criminal records but it's really giving clarification.

Now there's already a Supreme Court ruling on fair housing. There's also HUD guidance that has said that landlords may not blanketly discriminate and deny people on the basis of a criminal conviction.

But what HUD has actually issued out to our landlords is that they have to conduct an individualized assessment that takes into account

all those other mitigating factors. They haven't give a specific guidance on how to do that individualized assessment.

The policy that we've put forward and the markup of H.B. 5122 provides a template for how to actually conduct that individualize assessment so landlords would not deny people. More people with criminal records would have access to housing but also that landlords would be on the right side of staying in compliance with fair housing because right now, if they do blanketly deny people, they could be in violation of the Fair Housing Act.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay, so I'm just gonna repeat what I understand. What you're saying is that this bill gives a way of protecting the landlords because if they are not following some guidelines, they would have exposure with respect to not following the HUD and the Fair Housing laws. The Federal laws.

RICHARD CHO: That's correct. The landlords, if they don't actually have an individualized assessment of whether a criminal conviction is relevant to whether somebody will be a good tenant or not, they could be in violation of Fair Housing currently.

So I think this bill actually gives us a way to help landlords to comply with Fair Housing while also helping people with criminal records to be able to access housing in a greater -- to a greater degree.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay. Thank you so much for -- for your clarification. Does anyone have any other questions for Mr. Cho? Again, thank you for your testimony and I think your chart for looking at

the recommendations was very helpful. I've seen it and we are gonna try to see how that can be improved and looked at because I know your committee had done a lot of work on this and a lot of people had volunteered on that committee.

So it's important for us that we -- as we address this -- that we keep in mind all the effort and expertise that everybody brought to the table and we must listen to their concerns. Thank you. Thank you.

Just for everybody else, there's another committee meeting that I have to be at. I'm the Vice Chair for Children's Committee so I may just go there for a little bit and I'll be back here as well. And I'll be between these two committees for the public hearing, so. But this is my priority, just to let you know.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I don't think they have to vote on you in here. No, I'm joking. John Souza.

JOHN SOUZA: Good afternoon, Chairman McGee and members of the Committee. My name's John Souza. Can you hear me okay?

My name's John Souza, I'm the President of the Connecticut Coalition Property Owners. We have chapters all around the state -- different landlord groups that we work with to try to get them information what goes on up here at the State and they also give us feedback as to their thoughts on all these things.

We've been around the State Capitol for over 20 years as a constructive voice for landlords and such issues as nuisance abatement, bedbugs, domestic

violence. I'm also a full-time landlord myself so I currently volunteer as the President.

I was involved with Richard, if he's still here, on the committees to try and find some solutions to these problems. I will say that it was a group effort to try and solve some of this. I can't say that all of the members from the different groups that I work with are happy about it and some of them are quite cranky, let's be honest, it's tough being a landlord -- providing low-income housing, providing affordable housing -- it's a tough business.

Landlords get, you know, burnt a lot so they get kind of jaded sometimes in things that they do and that's too bad but that's part of the system we work with.

I did supply several pieces of testimony for each separate bill but the one I'd like to talk about today is the 5122, the criminal convictions, just so we have a better understanding of how it affects landlords.

As Richard said, it's such a great need for people to get housing that once they're homeless, they come out of incarceration. We understand the need to try and solve the problem. We do support conditionally the 5122 with the way originally that we wrote it up with Richard. I guess you already have the chart, understanding some of the changes that we proposed.

But looking over my own testimony, the lookback period should be quite lengthy. According to HUD already, which we have to abide by, we can look back up to ten years or more. We can't see into the hearts of people, we can't tell what their future's

gonna be but we can only see what their past was and be able to make assessments on that.

We walk a fine line trying to protect our innocent tenants. You know, these buildings can be full of, you know, young people -- innocent young people, elderly people, maybe your aunt, your uncle, whatever. I do have several buildings that I have a lot of people with mental disabilities that are -- can easily be taken care of and we do have concerns. We wanna make sure that we get somebody in the building that won't hurt these people. I feel like it's part of our job.

Sorry, this is quite long but also landlords are looking for the opportunity -- we're willing to look at opportunity when people present mitigating circumstances and -- excuse me, I'm a little nervous.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): So how about I ask you a question and allow for you to have a little bit more time to explain.

JOHN SOUZA: Sure.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): [Clears throat] Excuse me. So I noticed in your written testimony pretty much the association has opposed just about the majority of the bills. And I -- I really appreciate your feedback within your testimony as well as to why you all are in opposition.

Could you, before we get to 5122, which you -- which you support -- could you elaborate a little bit on the 5124, the notification to tenants of foreclosure? And just explain a little bit your "sink the ship" analogy. You know, I'm just looking

at this as an opportunity to give the tenant just how transparency, this is where we are, and hopefully the relationship between the tenant and the landlord -- I, too, have properties that I serve as a landlord and it's pretty much a one-person show, it's a big job.

And so I think I agree with you but I think it's also my responsibility as a landowner -- homeowner -- to let the tenant know, who's helping me to pay the mortgage on that property, "Hey, we're in trouble."

JOHN SOUZA: I understand both sides. And my point being was that if you're struggling to pay the mortgage company. Say you lost -- a tenant stopped paying you. You're a small landlord of three, let's make it easy. And one of the tenants or two of the tenants aren't paying you and you're struggling with the mortgage company. If I tell the third tenant, "Hey, I'm being foreclosed", and they stop paying, what are my chances of getting back in good standing with the mortgage company if no one's paying me the rent.

I'm gonna guess that most people that start foreclosures, go into foreclosure, want desperately to solve the situation, want to be able to catch up.

I know the state of Connecticut has pretty good programs if people are working to pay that they will let them pay and work out, you know, some kind of agreement.

So hopefully that if we don't automatically stop the tenants from paying, we can solve the problem. That was my perspective on it.

I understand, you know, most tenants still have the legal right to live in the apartment. Depending on who owns it, they have to be notified of eviction proceedings if a bank takes it over and you they -- you know, they want everybody out. They'll have sufficient notice at that point that they'd have to get out.

It's not that they can just move them in and say, "Hey, you've gotta get out", doesn't -- nothing like that happens in Connecticut. Can't happen.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Yeah, I appreciate that and I think, you know, one of the things that I had some reservations was the relationship between the actual landlord and the tenant, right, and you outlined that.

You know, what if the tenant just stopped paying rent? Then how is the land homeowner going to pay whatever arrearage and you know, the mortgage that they have.

But I've also been told through some folks at Legal Aid that a tenant could create an escrow account, you know, with the local housing court and until whatever, you know, monies -- or rather not monies -- but until the foreclosure is addressed, until the property is where it needs to be in terms of being up to code. Then those monies could be utilized to pay the landlord which is, I think, an option that many of us could take advantage of as homeowners.

I'm just trying to figure out what would be a happy medium. I mean we have a lot of people in many of our municipalities who are essentially calling DOH, local housing authorities -- not realizing that it's a private landlord, first of all -- but they're

saying, "What am I supposed to do if, in fact, I come home, there's a foreclosure sign right in front of my house?"

That tenant, I don't even think they realize, you know, there's a -- there's time that they have to find a new place or to have a conversation with the homeowner and they don't really know that. All they know is we -- we're gonna be put out, you know.

And so we're trying to figure out again how to protect, number one, the homeowner but also the tenant as well. So I'd love to have a further discussion with you. Maybe even your members, to really figure out how do we come to some -- some happy medium.

JOHN SOUZA: I'm sure we can figure out something. It doesn't sound that complicated that -- for everybody.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): So just moving right along to House Bill 122 (sic), which is the criminal conviction. I don't even like the way it's tied over, we'll work on that later.

But criminal convictions of perspective tenant. And then also Senate Bill 109, which is criminal records of tenants, to look back through it.

This started about two years ago. Myself and the Commissioner on Equity and Opportunity which they now have like this long, long name. And then this year, under the leadership of Representative Porter and others working on the Collateral Consequences of the Judicial System.

It feels like, you know, I'm having like a moment in time, if you would. It feels like the same

conversation we had last year with the tenants. They sat at the table, they were a part of the working groups. And it was an absolutely amazing time that we had together coming up with solutions that would offer formerly incarcerated access to housing.

I'm still trying to figure out how do we get to a place where we have protections for our landlords but also provide opportunity for those coming home. And I'm not gonna go through the long list of -- of the why we can't do -- why we can't do -- I really wanna figure out the solution.

And maybe you can enlighten me on this. You know, do we go with the Governor's, you know, proposal in addition to HUD regulations that prohibit certain crimes? It's driven. It drives a conversation. We already know that.

But we do know that there's some bad actors. Bad actors. That discriminate against people with backgrounds. I'm trying to figure out how do we address this? At least from the Housing Committee who should also be a partner in this as well.

Could you elaborate?

JOHN SOUZA: I'll try my best. I mean I get what you're saying. I will say something that I said to Richard's group. The main problem that would solve a lot of these concerns for both sides is there's just not enough affordable housing. There's not enough cheap housing. I'm being blunt.

If there was a thousand empty units sitting around Hartford because we had an abundance of housing, guess what. Landlords would take a lot more risk,

if you wanna call it that, and they would -- they would go out on a limb to try and fill some of these apartments. They would automatically say, "Well, this person only has a marijuana conviction three years ago one time. You know, I can see everything. Why wouldn't I take a chance, it'd be stupid not to. That's good business."

So the main concern, I think, is that there's a lot -- there's a need for affordable housing. And how did the -- we talked -- some other speaker spoke about how to solve this problem. You know, zoning changes in towns.

But it's more than just zoning changes and maybe it's part of zoning change but building code changes. And I don't know if that's the right term but you know, in Hartford you can only have three unrelated families in one unit. You're familiar with that.

So if you've got one of these big old mansions, you know, in the west end or something, you can only put three roommates in it. In reality, you could probably get six, seven people in there, you know, and that would be an opportunity to house -- take a housing for people reentering into society and let them live there as roommates for a while till they get back on their feet. It's inexpensive because they can all split the cost.

You know, stuff like that if it -- the private sector can do these things if we have the ability to do it. When the state builds property -- builds housing -- we all know it's three, four, \$500,000 dollars a unit. It's not really affordable, it's just that somebody else is paying for it and you

know, the person that gets it gets it affordably.  
The taxpayers pay for it.

So you know, there's only so much money to go  
around. The state's broke. How do we solve these  
problems? We're gonna have to be creative.

We're willing to be creative. You know, some of my  
solutions here are basically saying -- let us see --  
let us see a lot of their record and we can use the  
HUD guidelines to make, you know, decisions.

I will say one other thing and this sounds counter-  
intuitive but if it were easier to evict somebody  
you would take a lot more risk.

Back in my father's day, he started in this 55 years  
ago, it was quite easy to evict somebody. You know,  
if you had a rooming house or whatever, you didn't  
want them there, you'd tell them to leave and they'd  
pretty much go because the police would come and  
take them away. But that doesn't happen.

So he was willing to take chances on people. Today  
you have to look pretty careful, it could cost you  
four, five, six, \$7,000 dollars to do, you know,  
lost rents and eviction process. So yeah, they're  
scared. You know, they wanna look extra hard when  
they wanna rent to somebody.

So I see both sides of it. We wanna help, we want  
to solve the problem.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Yeah. No, and I can -- I can  
tell and I appreciate your passion and your  
willingness to even have this conversation. Because  
it's easy to just say no, you know.

JOHN SOUZA: That won't get it.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): But you know, one of the things, in here because we could probably have this conversation for a while and I know other members have questions. Please -- please know that this committee is not anti-landlord, anti-landlord association, condo association. We're all in this together to provide housing for everyone.

So I know, you know, there's been conversations about immunity for landlords in protecting them because, you know, for example there could be an individual with a particular background. Something happens on your property, guess who's responsible. We are, right.

And so we have to figure out how to provide some protections as well but also opportunities for that respective tenant to have some -- some sort of a protection as well.

So this warrants more discussion which is why we're having a public hearing, to hear from folks and to really go back to the drawing board and see where we could come up with some proposed language.

Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Souza, thank you for being here.

JOHN SOUZA: My pleasure.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): You're a brave one. You volunteered to be the President of the Association.

JOHN SOUZA: I'm the least grumpy of the grumpy ones.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): God bless you. You know, as the Chairman mentioned, your testimony kinda outlined a lot of your association's position.

But I found it interesting and I would welcome you to give me a little more background in publicly sharing that you offer conditional support for 5122. And may I correct that, that might be a typo for our notes. For 5199?

JOHN SOUZA: Let me look at my [crosstalk].

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Should it be 5129?

JOHN SOUZA: Fifty-one ninety-nine. Satellite dish removal?

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Okay, is that what you were talking about?

JOHN SOUZA: Yes, yes. [Crosstalk]

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): All right, that's clarification but share with me your conditional support or rather your association's conditional support. And I do applaud that you sat in as Mr. Cho mentioned earlier, the -- that the task force in regards to evaluating and having all shareholders involved.

But talk to me again about your conditional support and some of the thoughts and concerns you want to offer to that.

JOHN SOUZA: Thank you, I appreciate the opportunity. I did sit in and I was trying to give a landlord's perspective on the whole situation.

And already we've already -- this is -- HUD guidelines have been around for, I think, since

2016. So we'll say four years for discussion. And it's becoming commonplace.

Originally a landlord's like, "What? Gotta rent to felons? Come on, that's crazy." And then you kind of explain it to them, "No, you just have to look as a whole, look at the picture, find out what they did, how long ago." I mean you're crazy not to rent to somebody who has a criminal record 20 years ago, you know, for something minor. That doesn't make any common sense. So we try and explain that to people. They get that picture at this point. So everybody gets it.

But now I think a lot of the thought in the landlord groups is we're giving special rights to -- to convicts and you know, that includes, you know, because of their color, they're saying. But that includes white men also that are convicts are gonna have these same rights of which we understand.

So --

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Just -- just for the record.

JOHN SOUZA: Yeah.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Formerly incarcerated.

JOHN SOUZA: I'm sorry, it says it in my -- I apologize. But this is the -- I listened to the stuff and I try to work with everybody on their level if I can.

So, you know, some of the things we came up with is trying to closely narrow the HUD standard so I think that people already understand that. They can do it. But what happens when you do that, we've discovered, is that first of all, we're gonna say

ten years just for a lookback period because we wanna be able to see patterns. It's not that we -- personally I think they should be able to see it all and look for patterns.

Some of the stuff, if you drop off, let's say you cap something at three years lookback for misdemeanor which I think is what the bill was originally asking for. If they had -- they were in jail for a year or two and they come out and they have one year out but you know, they had four or five convictions prior, you won't be able to see it. So we just wanna see the pattern, see the person, their behavior over a long period of time. That's important.

Number two is mitigating factors. So in the bill, they stress that, you know, the tenant would be able to respond if you deny them, you'd have to give them a reason why. And I don't have a problem with that, I'm just saying that -- bring it with you when you come. Bring your -- I've, you know, got a good job, my family supported me, I'm getting married and I'm going to school.

Bring that letter with you because landlords sell time and if I have to wait two weeks to send out a letter saying, "Sorry, we might rent to you, here it is", and you know, I'm gonna lose another month's rent, you know, because the month is coming up. Landlords don't like that.

Lastly, the liability stuff. So if you're asking landlords to make decisions based on things that aren't concrete, in other words you're not saying, "Assault One and lower you have to rent to them." You're saying if it affects the health, safety and welfare.

Well, we're gonna make decisions. Is Assault Two something that we should deny or Assault Three something that I should deny? I'm gonna make that decision in good faith, you know, looking at a long history of the person and I don't wanna get sued in the CHR, the discrimination court for making that good faith decision.

So that's why we asked if you look at the last part about -- it's kind of technical but if you've been sued by a CHR court you'll know all about it. Their standards there for proof are much lower than it is for like a criminal court.

So we're just asking that, you know -- hey, we're willing to go out on a limb to do this stuff but, you know, don't beat us over the head when we're making a good faith effort to try and help people, you know, get into apartments. That's what it comes down to.

And lastly, the thing you said earlier about, you know, protecting landlords for immune from liability if they do something incorrect. And it's simple stuff but it's a big thing when you're a landlord, you know, you spend your life trying to avoid lawsuit and trying to make everybody happy. You know, all your tenants' problems become your problems when you're a landlord, as you probably know, Senator McGee. Does that help? I hope I helped.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): It helped and just for me and I'll summarize what I kinda gather from what you've shared. I think as the Chairman mentioned, there -- there are bad actors in every aspect of our society.

But I also think that the majority of your members are individuals that are looking to rent their properties.

JOHN SOUZA: Absolutely.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Because when it's empty, they're not making money. And -- and so from that incentive, I would dare to say that most of your members are looking to have full capacity and to rent out to as many available tenants as possible.

And -- and so I would offer that -- there are bad actors in everything. Generally I look at -- and the landlords I talk to, they would absolutely love to have every apartment rented because that makes them happy.

JOHN SOUZA: Sure, that's a good thing.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Number two, I think when you talk about the liability question, it's not only holding landlords as the owner of the property and the -- the landlord. From liability should anything occur.

But you also have to be concerned about the wellbeing of other tenants within your -- within your building. And so there is a real concern, not only from a standpoint of -- of your own personal financial liability but also the wellbeing and the liability of all of your tenants.

I think number three ultimately, for you to demonstrate and sitting in this working group and recognizing that for those that are formerly incarcerated that have paid their debt and deserve another chance, that would it be fair for me to say that you as an organization and you as an individual

would be very receptive to working out a -- a compromise to facilitate housing opportunities for every individual.

And particularly for those that are looking a second chance to be able to have a fresh new start for a better future. Would it be safe for me to say that you would support that if all the other pieces fall into place?

JOHN SOUZA: I personally have no problem with that and that's why I'm here. I want you to understand, this is a coalition so these are basically other small mom-and-pop landlord groups and that we basically introduce ourselves to them, explain how we do. Give them information to give us feedback. That's how it works.

I try -- I try to educate. We do a lot of education. I think if it was something reasonable that everyone can live with that's very close to the HUD guidelines, I think they would have success.

It may not be this year, I know it's a short session. But I think as enough people understand that it's not the end of the world that we would be able to live with it. As long as there's protections for landlords and protections for tenants, like you say. Because that's the most important thing to most landlords.

So I think we could probably work something out.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And I think the other thing, speaking for members of your association, these aren't large, you know, multiple property owners. These are small mom-and-pop operations in which some of these people have another fulltime job and made

some property investments and they're managing it to try to get some supplemental income and make improvements to properties that they've been able to acquire.

These are not big faceless conglomerates that are managing hundreds of thousands of properties. These are two-family, three-family, one or two kind of investment properties that they're trying to make ends meet.

Would that be a fair description of your association membership? And those are the people that, like yourself said earlier, it is a genuineness that you were uncomfortable, a little nervous in testifying. You're not professional, you know, lobbyists, you're not professional, you know, testifiers.

You're people that are trying to make a little extra income based upon your investment in communities and properties and you just want to be able to protect your interest and feel like there's a voice. Would that be fair to say?

JOHN SOUZA: That's 100 percent accurate and all of our -- all of our members that can speak for sure are local people that own local properties. We're not any Reed representation or anything like that.

So we are people with hands-on experience, you know, locally.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And I can affirm that because I've gotten many calls from your members who have said, "Look, I'd love to come and testify but I've gotta go to work."

And these are some of the challenges so I appreciate you -- again -- as I said in the beginning,

volunteering to be the President of the association, being a voice.

But I also appreciate your openness and reaching a compromise because I do believe we have some responsibility for those that have paid the price and mistakes that they've made -- for re-entry and an opportunity to succeed. And housing is a critical part of it.

And I hope to be able to work with your association and many others to be able to reach a compromise so that we can give people a housing foundation to move and change for a better and new life. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[APPLAUSE]

JOHN SOUZA: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. You know, before you step away, appreciate your testimony. I'll just end off on this.

You know, I heard a few comments from Senator Hwang with respect to your association and all of your members who, unfortunately couldn't be here to testify. I probably could say that there were so many formerly incarcerated who can't be here as well to testify in favor of this bill as well.

So I don't wanna bring that as one of the most important points but I think to end off on this particular testimony is our opportunity to work together to figure out how could we come up with some legislation that will support all stakeholders.

And so I commend you on your work and what you're doing and I look forward to having that conversation with you. Thank you so much.

JOHN SOUZA: Thank you guys. And lady. Oh, she's gone.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Steve Hill?

STEVE HILL: Good afternoon Chairman McGee, ranking members Hwang and Zullo and members of the Housing Committee.

Satellite Broadcasting and Communications Association, SBCA, respectfully submits this testimony in opposition of H.B. 1, 5119 concerning removal satellite dishes.

SBCA is the trade association for the consumer-based satellite industry representing over 30 million consumers throughout the United States.

The SBCA opposes the proposed legislation for the following reasons.

First, it's anti-competitive. The satellite industry provides much-needed market competition to cable. By making it harder for satellite companies to provide service, it helps an already dominant cable industry. Less competition, less regard for consumer price, content and service.

Two, it's anti-technology. Cable, power lines and telephone lines all crisscross streets, sidewalks throughout the city. Should all these be required to be neatly tied together or completely buried throughout the state?

Air conditioning units dot the sides of every house and apartment block and we do not require them to be

flush with the façade or removed when they're not working. The state should not single out satellite systems while leaving other consumer products alone.

Third, the satellite dish is the consumer's property. We don't have the right to remove that property if it is no longer in use. That is the consumer's responsibility.

Fourth, the bill actually flies in the face of the Federal prohibition restricting satellite service to those who want it. Enacted in 1996, the Federal Communications Commission's, or FCC's OTARD rule which stands for Over the Air Reception Device prohibits restrictions that prevent or delay installation, maintenance or use of antennae satellite systems which are covered by the rule.

In fact, on April 18th, 2018, the FCC invalidated the City of Philadelphia's ruling on satellite dish registration and removal by the provider. It held that these requirements, which were enacted by the city in 2011, were pre-empted by the OTARD rule.

This decision had little impact as the Commission had already prohibited Philadelphia from enforcing the rules under the OTARD so-called automatic stay provision.

So the state put a -- city put a rule in place and then seven years later it was invalidated by the FCC. So it's a very long process.

The satellite industry takes the sponsor's concern regarding dish removal very seriously. However, due to the issues noted above, we must oppose.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written and verbal testimony.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you so much, Mr. Hill. And this bill came before our committee -- or actually was sent to our committee -- from several members of a particular delegation with respect to the satellite dishes being on many of the two and three-family homes. And in most cases, becoming sort of a blight, if you would.

And so I appreciate your testimony and your reasons why. So just to give you some context on, you know, where it was coming from.

Any questions, comments? Representative Rose and then Representative Butler.

REP. ROSE (118TH): Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'm sorry that I missed your testimony. However, in a conversation with one of our interns in the building, he brought up the fact that if I -- and correct me if I'm wrong -- say for example, I'm gonna use two different companies.

I'm a Direct TV subscriber. They come out, they put a satellite dish on my roof. I now own that dish.

STEVE HILL: Yes, ma'am.

REP. ROSE (118TH): Okay, so now I'm not happy with Direct TV and I change to another provider. What would preclude you from using the dish that I already own and not having to put another dish on my roof?

STEVE HILL: Well, that's a great question. Because it's a different technology. So with Direct TV I'm aiming at a satellite over here. With Dish Network, I'm actually aiming at a satellite here and they're actually using a different process, different

signal, the receivers are different so it's a complete different technology.

I can't -- I can't intermix those, unfortunately. So I mean look, from a provider's standpoint, if you could just go like that, hey that'd be great. We'd save hundreds of dollars.

I mean if I'm a business man, I'd be happy to do it. You can't. It's literally two separate technologies -- an iPhone and an Android. They're not gonna work and be compatible.

REP. ROSE (118TH): Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

STEVE HILL: You're quite welcome.

REP. ROSE (118TH): Or Mr. Chairman.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Representative Butler. Hey, quick question. So which one is better, iPhone or Android? [Laughter]

STEVE HILL: Sorry.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72ND): Thank you and while I could appreciate your opposition to the bill, one thing I'd just like to state for the record the obscene amount of satellite dishes that are in, you know, many of our communities, the state needs to do something about because I could tell you that the Representative that actually brought this forward lives in my city and, you know, I went and drove -- that day when I heard his testimony and I looked at, you know, Main Street in his district.

And it started off being one or two satellite dishes on a house. Going further down the street, started being three and four. And it was every other house, then every house and then houses that had four and five satellite dishes.

It is just -- it's just obscene to the eye of how bad it is. And so I guess he has a point. And then on my way home, going through the main streets, I'm looking at the streets and houses in my district. And lo and behold, every other house has a couple satellites then every other one has three. And then every house has two. And before I got home, I'd seen places that had four and five satellite dishes.

It -- it's something that is plaguing our communities and at some point all these satellite dishes aren't functional and whether a house is being razed or the landlord just wants to dispose of the, you know, excess satellite dishes, we're gonna have to think about how to dispose of these things.

STEVE HILL: They are recyclable. I mean it's just -- it's an aluminum product so it is a recyclable product.

REP. BUTLER (72ND): Yeah.

STEVE HILL: But I mean again, it's the consumer that owns that product. We can't, as an industry, be the ones that [Crosstalk] the consumer's product.

REP. BUTLER (72ND): I'm just telling you the genesis of the bill.

STEVE HILL: I understand.

REP. BUTLER (72ND): Okay, I'm giving you the genesis of the bill so you can understand why there's a will to try to do something about it.

And again, a lot of people, you know, my drive down the streets and their focal point is on street level but let me tell you, anybody here lives in a town or city, now take a quick gander up, you know, upwards and look at the houses, you know, in your communities and you'll see that there's a need to come up with some policy to deal with these things.

Yeah, the -- yeah it's -- they're disposable but what -- are you gonna put them in the landfills? Or is somebody gonna come and gather them and recyclable -- recycle them in an appropriate manner?

That's more of the question. But now getting to the policy, for your particular company, if you were to go to, say an apartment building and there was a resident there that actually was looking to get your product and the person who owned or rented previous to that had the same satellite dish that you would currently sell to a new person, instead of putting on a new satellite, would you use the existing satellite?

STEVE HILL: It depends if -- if it was the exact same version. In some cases they've changed over time. Again, we have -- we have issues where we've been in houses with multiple families, they all have different service or they all have the same service. We can't use -- we have to use proprietary for that particular consumer in that case.

So there's some -- it's a difficult question to ask because you may be able to you may not. It really

depends on how that system was set up, what version it was, those type of things.

REP. BUTLER (72ND): In your experience, how often is the previous satellite been able to be utilized versus leaving that there and putting an additional satellite on a roof?

STEVE HILL: That's a great question so I'll use a great example. I just sold a house, my own personal house, and there is a Direct TV system there and you know, I've told the consumer that they could -- they could use that particular dish and they could -- the technician can just go and wire it up.

Again, from a business opportunity, you would wanna be able to do that if you could. Because again, we would be able to not have to have the additional expenses. The challenge is, we have to have the permission to be able to access somebody else's property to do that. Does that make sense?

REP. BUTLER (72ND): Well, it makes a lot of sense. I'm just -- the question is, how often do you find yourself in this situation where all these variables you're talking about are in -- they allow for you to actually, instead of putting in a Dish new satellite, using one that is currently there.

STEVE HILL: I can't answer that particular question, I'm not the -- I'm not the installation firm. So I represent the industry, I can try to find some of that information out.

REP. BUTLER (72ND): That would be helpful because, see, that's a part of the argument because I know some of the homes people are actually -- actually are requesting a use of the satellite product and

they're the same company but for some reason the technology may have evolved, okay.

But I -- I haven't once talked to somebody said -- I haven't once talked and heard testimony about this that says, "Oh, that worked for me. All I had to do, I had the same satellite system and they told me I didn't have to incur the cost of a new satellite because the one that was there, you know, previously, is gonna be able to be utilized. I haven't heard one testimony in that regard.

So -- and again, while I appreciate you coming to advocate for your business, I'm -- I think that we need to get a handle on how to best utilize or be able to have a reusable product that -- that technology doesn't just become obsolete so quickly that it leads to just more obsolete satellite dishes out there on roofs.

And not that that whole problem is your problem but I'm just saying, at some -- at some point -- at some point, I mean we have conversations about plastic straws here, okay. Okay, and plastic bags. And how they wind up in the ecosystem. I'm worried about those big dishes winding up in our landfills, okay. That's certainly more of a concern going forward because with the technology actually involving from satellite to say cable. The same people who actually sell the satellite dishes -- if they'd come up and totally have the next solution that says, "Oh, you don't even need those dishes anymore?" We could go and do this strictly through cable or wow. There's a lot of obsolete dishes that are gonna be out there that people are gonna to figure out what to do.

So I just wanted to let you know, first of all, the Genesis. Secondly that it would be advantageous if the technology was that we could reuse the current satellite dishes that are out there and -- and somehow be able to keep from adding additional satellite dishes on roofs where, you know, it's -- there are already got those many more than we need to be observing on our streets.

So again, I don't blame your business for this. I'm just saying that I will hope that your business is a part of trying to find a solution that could kind of reduce the amount of satellite dishes that wind up being obsolete out there on roofs.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Representative Zullo.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Just a quick question.

STEVE HILL: Sure.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): How would you feel if the bill read that it would require the removal of any outdated unusable obsolete technology of the same brand as the community and television company installing the current dish?

I mean I had an experience where I had Direct TV. I opted for cable for a while. Literally two years later I go back to Direct TV. It's an entirely different dish. It's only been two years. You know, technology evolves so quickly. What is the -- what is the harm or what is the decision of Direct TV to take that old dish in the process of installing the new one if it's their own technology.

STEVE HILL: You know, we'd have to get with the provider to see how that would work. You know and I'll have to circle back up with you on that particular question.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Because I can understand -- and I can understand Direct TV doesn't want Dish Network taking their satellites and vice versa. It probably would be a hindrance to competition.

But if it's your own technology and it's obsolete, outdated, what harm is it for you to take it when you're installing the new technology? I don't think it's much of an imposition.

I drive down my old street in East Haven every day and there is a satellite dish that looks like it's straight out of a 1970s movie. The company that installed it is probably long gone. It's probably half the size of this oval right here. I don't even know how it's on the roof.

But I laugh at it every time because I mean there's no reason it should be there.

STEVE HILL: So those large dishes like that actually would not fall under that OTARD rule so that would have nothing to do with us. That particular rule is just related to the smaller dish systems that came around back in '94, '96 -- that time frame.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. You know, I'm reminded -- just in closing, I think we're done with the questions, just a comment. I'm reminded of the cable boxes, right. The consumer is actually responsible for returning the box. I'm wondering if

this could be the same situation where we include that as one of, I guess, the responsibilities of -- in addition to what you're saying -- but the responsibilities of the consumer to actually return the satellite.

I mean I show up at my house and I saw a dish on the house. I'm like, "Oh my God, where did this come from?"

But again, it's not up to the consumer to remove it. Once they're done, they're done and they move on and that satellite dish is still there.

But again, thank you for your testimony and we look forward to further conversations. Thank you.

STEVE HILL: Appreciate your time.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Kiley Gosselin.

KILEY GOSSELIN: Good afternoon, Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, ranking and honorable members and members of the Housing Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today on the proposed bills before you.

My name is Kiley Gosselin. I am the Executive Director at the Partnership for Strong Communities. We're a statewide nonprofit policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ending homelessness, expanding affordable housing and building strong communities.

The Partnership and staff that manage the statewide Reaching Home and Home Connecticut campaigns for more than 15 years. These campaigns made up of more than 200 nonprofit state agency advocate and provider partners work every year through an

organized process to create and use one legislative agenda based on the latest data calculations and best practices.

As many of you are aware, we've made significant progress during the 15 years that Reaching Home has been in existence, reducing our state's homelessness population and shelter use by nearly half. But as all of you know, our work is also not done.

A written testimony today outlines nine Housing Committee bills that we are supporting in some form. I'll highlight just a couple of those concepts now. I also want to note that the Reaching Home campaign and our partners, many of whom are here today -- I see Journey Home and CCH among others -- has spent time this year focusing on our efforts around making homelessness rare, brief and one time.

And rare, brief and one time is the Federal definition of ending homelessness and we spent months running calculations and examining our robust state-wide data system to determine what type of financial investments would be necessary to take a significant step towards that goal.

I've shared that agenda and some of those investments with you and I also spoke about them at last week's Appropriations hearing. So today I just wanna highlight, again, a couple of the bills in front of you.

First, we support the overall goal of Senate Bill number 105. This is the Right to Housing. Indeed, the visions of the Reaching Home Campaign and Home Connecticut is that no one should experience homelessness or be without a safe, stable place to call home.

While we support the vision of this bill, we are concerned that as currently drafted, the bill establishes a right to shelter. The right to shelter concept has proven notoriously problematic in places like Massachusetts and New York City.

The policy has had the unintended consequence of shifting scarce funding to cover emergency housing resources while sacrificing funding for permanent housing solutions.

The end result has been an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness and households languishing in temporary emergency housing such as motels indefinitely.

We're supportive of the three approaches identified in the bill for prevention of homelessness including payment of rent and utility arrearages, legal support for residents facing eviction and connection to services that would address factors that may lead to homelessness. And believe that these valuable resources, if appropriated, would be most effective if they're focused on targeted populations who are most at risk of homelessness versus broad eligibility.

Finally, I just wanna talk about House Bill 5129. This is the bill that provides housing planning six months prior to release from corrections facilities. We're in support of this. It also provides for mental health assessment which is key.

However, we want to note that the bill, as written, provides reference to the 211 info line for assistance with obtaining housing and our fears this may focus folks in the -- incarcerated persons into

being discharged directly into the emergency response system.

So we advise taking that six-month window and working with the Department of Corrections to really focus that upstream housing planning upstream and not relying on our 211 emergency system.

And further, we support more resources being allocated to support housing for individuals exiting our criminal justice system through things such as FUSE which is also known as the Connecticut Collaborative on Reentry which specifically provides housing units for this population.

Finally, I wanna echo support for our Senate Bill 109 and House Bill 5122. We know that efforts to ease barriers to safe stable housing for folks who've exited the criminal justice system is critical. As others have noted, multiple data analyses have shown the overlap as that homeless population nears 50 percent.

Thanks and I'll take questions.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you so much Kiley and thank you for your leadership and the work you're doing. Partnership -- and it's just absolutely amazing that work that you all are doing. Any questions? Comments? Senator Anwar?

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you for your comments on 105. I think some of my other friends, including advocates, have looked at that and making some suggestions.

KILEY GOSSLIN: Yeah.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): So I'll try to probably see if we can sit down and look at some of the experiences in other states and see how we can probably prevent that from happening here. But I appreciate your comments.

KILEY GOSSLIN: And I should know what you go to work with -- you and the rest of the Committee on the bills. We really support the concept and are more than welcome to sitting down and look forward to talking more about it.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Next up we have Emilee and I think I'm gonna really mess up your last name but is it Gaebler?

EMILEE GAEBLER: Yes.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Oh, cool.

EMILEE GAEBLER: Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Representative McGee, Senator Anwar and honorable members of the Housing Committee.

My name is Emilee Gaebler and I am here on behalf of all our kin. I'd like to direct you to the written testimony that I submitted earlier today that discusses the provisions of H.B. 5121 with stories of many providers.

On behalf of one of those providers who could not be here today, I'd like to take the rest of my time to read her story.

My name is Emmanuella Lauture and I am the owner of Ma Maison Childcare in Stamford. I am licensed by the state and also have licenses in early childhood education.

For seven years I've operated a family childcare business out of my home, caring for six children. My waitlist quickly grew and in 2016 I applied for a special exception application with the town of Stamford.

I wanted to grow to care for 12 children from the six. My application was denied because I lacked one parking spot. I had three spaces instead of the four required. I was told I could reapply for approval for ten children which would allow only three parking spaces and I did so.

I hired an attorney to assist me with this and once again my application was denied. This time because of neighborhood opposition regarding traffic concerns. I had been running my business for years with no traffic concerns raised.

I then tried to start anew, purchasing a home with my sister. I engaged a surveyor to come and check the parking situation to ensure that I could open a larger group childcare center there. But shortly after closing, I was told that the garage space that I intended to convert into a daycare center could not be converted.

I was devastated and did not know what to do. I made the hard decision to purchase another home that I thought was perfect. It had four spaces, a two-car garage, a circular driveway for parents to use when dropping off children and an entire floor in the home that I could dedicate fully to my childcare facility.

I once again submitted an application to the zoning board and for a third time I was denied. Neighbors who did not know me, who did not know my business,

opposed my application and even questioned my capabilities to run a childcare business despite my demonstration of both state and early education licenses.

This process has taken a toll on me. After three unsuccessful zoning applications, two home purchases and more than \$21,000 dollars in legal fees, I am still unable to open a childcare home. The local zoning is burdensome and too subjective. Particularly for childcare businesses which are a community asset.

H.B. 5121 ensures that licensed and qualified childcare providers like me can make high quality affordable childcare and early education accessible to all Connecticut families who need it.

I urge you to support H.B. 5121. Thank you for your time.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Emilee and also thank you for your testimony in reading on behalf of -- what was the lady's name?

EMILEE GAEBLER: Emmanuella Lauture.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Emmanuella. I appreciate the notes in here where you recommend extending zoning protections to include group child care and you also provide other states in here that have done such to accommodate group childcare.

I can remember my mom actually having a daycare. We didn't have the fancy names, it was just a daycare and it was all of the folks from the local community who would drop their children off for my mom to watch. She was a licensed childcare provider.

So I think the biggest concern that I'm hearing thus far is that local residents within these communities have a concern with traffic, I suspect.

So I'm very appreciative of your testimony on behalf of the young lady and also I'm -- I'm taken back by the amount of money being spent. It's kinda -- kind of outrageous. I mean \$21,000 dollars in debt for legal fees is a bit much.

But again, thank you. Thank you for your testimony. I supported this bill last year, I'm glad to see it come back. You guys cleaned it up a little bit and you're coming out a number so I really appreciate it.

Any other comments or questions from the committee? Senator Anwar.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your testimony and actually sharing the story and this story is precisely why this bill is over here. This story is exactly why in this situation women are less likely to get the opportunities that men can get at times and -- and the children cannot get the care in the local communities.

This is the story where the childcare crisis is getting exacerbated and significantly impacting our communities.

So when you put this story forward, it hopefully will humanize it more for people who actually have concerns. This is real life challenges that people have and this is not allowing our state to move forward. It's not allowing families to move forward, it's not allowing women to be able to start

their entrepreneurial capacities to be able to provide good care in the local communities.

So this reassures me that this needs to be done and I'm hoping this story will allow others to actually recognize that this needs to be done.

Thank you so much.

EMILEE GAEBLER: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Senator Hwang. Oh, don't leave just yet, Emilee. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And you thought you were done, huh? No, I wanna just take a moment. So you're part of the law school program?

EMILEE GAEBLER: Correct.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): So I wanna compliment you for -- I apologize for stepping out for a little bit. But let me take this quick moment to acknowledge also your professor, Anika Singh Lemar for her advocacy. She's terrific. So I just wanted to do a big shout out and thank her for her advocacy as well. So thank you for being here.

EMILLE GAEBLER: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Liz Fraser?

LIZ FRASER: Good afternoon, Senator Anwar, who left. Representative McGee and members of the Housing Committee.

I am Liz Fraser and I am the Policy Director for the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS).

As a policy and program non-profit with a mission of promoting equity, the economic wellbeing of all

families, and thriving children, CAHS strongly supports HB 5121.

This bill seeks to equalize and streamline the local permitting process for family home childcare providers, providing greater access to childcare across our state, and added opportunity for families to grow small businesses.

For 30 years, this law has been in place to provide licensed home care for families in their particular home setting. However, as we've heard, due to some restrictive local permitting processes, many home providers are finding it -- are finding it increasingly difficult to open, expand or run their businesses.

This has effectively made providing licensed home-based care prohibitive for some families and is limiting availability.

Accessible childcare is a foundation for a working society. Affordable care with proximity to transportation and hours that match a parent work schedule are necessary for parents to support their families and contribute to Connecticut's economy.

Historically, the licensed home family care has filled this need for many families. It can be more flexible with fluctuating parent work schedules which is very important considering almost 30 percent of our children are living in families where no parent -- no parent has stable employment, meaning year around full-time. So parents are on schedules that are -- that are very not predictable.

Providers can be in local neighborhoods, parents can find care closer to home and with providers who speak in their native language for some families.

However, it is the smaller, more intimate family environment that attracts many families, especially for families with infants and toddlers. I, myself, had my child in a family home care setting in a residential area and that's what I chose for my family.

Ensuring a strong family childcare system is also an -- it's an economic issue. Providers are small business owners and their services contribute to the economy thrice -- licensed home care provides for families to work with peace of mind knowing their children are in good care; they provide a strong and nurturing environment and owners are able to provide for their own families and there's more -- we know that there's a crisis with childcare but I just thank you for this time.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you so much, Liz and I'm definitely a fan of the Connecticut Associations for Human Services. The work you do is absolutely phenomenal. And thank you for your testimony today.

Any questions or comments for Liz from the committee? No? Thank you so much.

LIZ FRASER: Thank you very much.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Have a great afternoon. Kelly Ann Day.

KELLY DAY: Good afternoon. My name is Kelly Ann Day and I have been the Chief Executive Officer for new Reach for nearly 25 years.

We're a nonprofit that serves over 3,000 people annually in New Haven and Fairfield County who are affected by homelessness and poverty. And we do that through an integrated system that includes prevention, crisis services and housing.

With about 75 qualified staff, our goal is to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and only one time. And today I'm here to advocate for Senate Bill 105 as New Reach has seen firsthand how proven prevention models can effectively and efficiently prevent evictions as well as homelessness and safe significant societal costs.

The prevention -- the Princeton Eviction Lab shows that Connecticut has had 14, over 13,000, almost 14,000 evictions in 2016 and close to 18,000 evictions in 2017.

The cumulative number of evictions -- Bridgeport, New Haven, Waterbury and Hartford -- make up about 50 percent of the entire state.

I'd like to address two of the components of the bill. I definitely advocate for the assistance of services -- social work services as well as legal services and the need for some financial services when necessary to help avoid eviction, especially as Kiley Gosslin mentioned, for our populations that are at high risk for homelessness. And that has characteristics that would predict that they are more likely to end up homelessness if they're housing were terminated.

So for example, families with young children, families with lack of access to education and high wage jobs. These are predictors of homelessness. There have been studies that show that.

It was interesting, I was listening to the gentleman, Mr. Souza, make his testimony about the struggles that landlords face and you know, with a solid eviction prevention program that addressed both the legal needs, the landlords' needs and the tenants' needs would be a win/win/win.

I kind of divert to my testimony here. I do have submitted testimony to talk about a program like that that we've been operating for the past 11 years in Bridgeport. We recently did a data match that showed that close to 300 families over the last four years that have gone through our program who were at risk of eviction from the Bridgeport Housing Authority and were not evicted did not show up in the Housing Emergency System. Did not show up on our guide name list here in the entire state of Connecticut.

So with that I have always lots to say on the subject and I'll be happy to take questions.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thanks again for your testimony. I've been trying to look off your -- your written testimony but unfortunately I can't find it. It doesn't mean that you haven't submitted it but could you -- could you just really quickly tell me again why you -- you support this bill?

I mean you -- you outline some really detailed areas and I think it was similar to Kiley.

KELLY DAY: Right.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I just -- I wanna be able to hear it.

KELLY DAY: Yeah. So when I -- when I think about the first part of this bill that is asking for the

right to housing for everyone as a means to prevent homelessness, I do think about different programs that have been started or have been working and piloting but specific population of individuals and families who have the predictive characteristics to become homelessness -- homeless.

So for example, Marybeth Chin [phonetic] who is a researcher out of Vanderbilt does study and she can show you what are the predictive characteristics of people who ultimately end up in the homeless system, in the crisis system.

If we can go upstream and we can target a population of folks who are more likely but if that last safety net of affordable housing is pulled out from under them, they have no choice but to enter into the homeless system.

If we can truly go upstream and work on that, we can save money for the state. We can certainly have societal changes of community benefits for the families and individuals. Especially for children who are more likely to become homeless adults for a homeless child.

So if we can avoid these individuals from entering the crisis system, we'll save money down the road, it'll be better for our communities and it could also benefit the landlords who are looking for stable tenants that are paying rent.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): So in other words, you're saying we should target, right?

KELLY DAY: I do think -- I think that that is very broad. I could not not be here to testify given the work that I've been doing for all these years. And

I think it's broad, I think we do need to look at some of the details around the right to housing and how we can -- how we can potentially target areas that we know are high risk to end up in the homeless system.

The second part of the bill that talks about shelter for all, our organization has been running emergency shelters for families in New Haven for the past 30 years and homeless shelters are expensive to run. They're not fully funded by the state or the welfare. And some of the interventions that we have created as a system with the help of the folks at The Partnership for a Strong Community and the Coalition on Homelessness over the years have a lot to divert some folks from shelter which actually create a high acuity level of living in shelters.

So many of our shelters are not properly staffed to even address some of the behavioral health needs and the trauma and the closest needs that some of our individuals are bringing with them.

So while I would definitely advocate for shelter for all, I think that our best investment is to go upstream to look at those predictives of homelessness and try to prevent individuals from falling into the system because the system is at capacity. The shelter system is at capacity.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I agree with you and I also agree with -- with Kiley. We keep speaking about you, Kiley, you just -- I think one of the things that you mentioned, Kiley, I believe she mentioned in her testimony, instead of shifting some of the resources to this idea of right to housing, perhaps allocate more funding to existing grants and initiatives that address homelessness.

While I agree with that, I believe the intent of this particular proposal is to wish the state of Connecticut to think more broadly on this topic of housing for all. Right, and how do we get the state of Connecticut, our municipalities, our funders, if you would -- to not only think innovatively on how we address homelessness but let's start building and not allow for certain communities to put up these invisible walls and say -- no, those folks aren't wanted here. We don't want shelters in our neighborhoods, right?

And so I believe, you know, in talking with many of our colleagues on this side, on this particular measure, you know, it is definitely one of those conversations where when we're all like -- all hands on deck and we're trying to figure out how best to come up with a piece of legislation that would create opportunities that would also leverage with what is already happening.

And so we're in a tough place. But I think it's a great opportunity to address the homelessness rates that continue to increase in the state of Connecticut but also to support all of you out on the front line that's doing all of the hard work.

KELLY DAY: Thank you so much for saying that and I would just, you know, I'd like to mention that the idea of ending homelessness as it is defined now as making it rare, brief and one time. We need to focus on all three of those areas equally because if we can prevent people from coming in, we will make it rare.

If we can -- if we can triage and help people who are falling into that crisis and get them out as

quickly as possible and as stably as possible, then we'll make it brief.

And the issue of affordable housing which we haven't even -- I haven't even talked about yet -- and the lack thereof is a whole 'nother part of it.

But all three of those areas need to be invested in order to be able to close, I believe, of at least a generation to really look at ending homelessness.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Gotcha.

KELLY DAY: I've been doing this for 25 years and I've seen people come back because there is no way out of the system in many [crosstalk].

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I've got a question for you and this really has nothing to do with this particular bill.

But we know the definition of homelessness, right? Does it include couch surfing by any chance?

KELLY DAY: There are two different --

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Like this new way of homelessness that's happening, especially with our young people. Help me -- do you have a response to that?

KELLY DAY: My first response is we haven't invested enough in almost 25 years ago or ten years ago or 15 years ago which is why we're seeing a new role of homeless youth now.

Rather than the two definitions for homelessness on the Federal level. There's a McKinney Vento definition which does include, in certain cases, if you're doubled up. Which would include your couch surfing example.

And then there's the Notice of Funding Availability Act that deals with the continuum of cares and the housing and homelessness stars which -- which does have a pretty lengthy definition regarding literally homeless.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Could you send that to me?

KELLY DAY: Sure.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you so much. And thank you for your testimony.

KELLY DAY: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): And next up we have Dave Pilon and Charles Ryan.

DAVE PILON: Good afternoon, Chairman McGee and honorable members of the Committee. I appreciate you allowing joint testimony here so thank you.

My name's David Pilon. I am an insurance broker with Bouvier Insurance in West Hartford, Connecticut. I serve community associations with a [Inaudible 02:49:06] insurance programs and I am here to discuss certain aspects of Raised Bill 5121 that I have some concerns with.

I am also a member of the Legislative Action Committee for the Connecticut Chapter of the Community Association Institute. And I will turn it over to Attorney Ryan, my colleague, also with LAC.

CHARLES RYAN: Thank you again, members of the Committee. I testified last year on a similar bill that came up and our main focus on behalf of Community Association Institute had to do with condominiums, planned communities and coops.

We usually refer to those as condos, just generally, but there are three types of condo communities.

In any event, today it's a little anticlimactic because we sat through some of the testimony and we hear that condo associations are really being carved out of this and really not anticipated to be affected by it.

With that being said, we're here to answer any questions that the Committee may have. Mr. Pilon does have a couple comments on insurance and how it affects it.

But again, based on the idea that the condominiums, common use communities will be unaffected, it won't be mandatory for them to, you know, require such housing -- excuse me -- child care services.

As I said, it's a little anticlimactic. So with that being said, Dave.

DAVID PILON: One of the big concerns that I have from an insurance standpoint with -- with the raised bill is section five which indicates that the association would be allowed to be named as an additional insured on the homeowner or the unit owner's policy. The unit owner who's maintaining the daycare.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Which -- which section was that?

DAVID PILON: Five, I believe it's five. Is that correct? Charles has it in front. It speaks to the adding or the ability of the daycare provider to add the community association as an additional insured to their homeowners' policy.

And as a broker representing approximately 25 or so carriers on a personal line side, very few -- if any -- would allow an association to be added to a personalized policy as an additional insured because the homeowner's policy simply doesn't contemplate the exposures -- that was a quick three minutes -- affiliated with a homeowner's policy.

So the homeowner association exposure simply can't be added on to a homeowner's policy for a daycare center. That's really the point of what I was trying to make.

I did submit written testimony. I apologize, the bill number's wrong, it relates to last year's bill. It also presents a number of exposures of community associations with states if they were forced to allow daycare centers in such a congested area.

It will attract nuisance, parking issues and the like. I do understand that -- I believe that they were -- the plan is to carve out condo associations from this bill, at least from what I've been told since I've arrived here. So that's why we decided to have a joint testimony to consolidate things a little bit.

But I'm happy to answer any questions from an insurance standpoint and Attorney Ryan certainly from a legal standpoint as it pertains to the community association involvement in this bill.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you so much for your testimony and I was actually made aware from my colleague that we would have further discussions on the [Inaudible 02:52:24] as well.

But I think it's just worth hearing some of your concerns which you've already shared with us so that we could take back and have our discussions during our screening meetings.

Any questions, comments, from the Committee? No? Thank you gentlemen so much.

DAVID PILON: Thank you. Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Next up Rafie. Minnie says it's Raffie.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: It's Rafie. And forget the last name. So [Laughter]. I just wanna say -- I want to say thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Rafael Podolsky, I'm a lawyer with Connecticut Legal Services and I'm here on behalf of Legal Aid programs.

I've submitted to you written testimony on six bills. I'm gonna try and say a little bit about each of them in three minutes and we'll see if I can get through.

And obviously I'm here, I'm happy to answer questions.

Number -- first is Senate Bill 105 which is the right to housing. I've suggested to Senator Anwar that it would be good -- I think that -- we support the concept very strongly but I think this particular draft of the bill needs a fair amount of work. I think it needs to focus more broadly on housing separate from homelessness. I think they need to be focused more narrowly by taking into consideration different income groups.

And sections two to ten I see as extraneous to the bill and I'm not sure they belong there at all. Section one is really the core of the bill. So I would welcome the opportunity to participate in further discussions.

Second is House Bill number 5120 which deals with residents of public housing being presented voter registration forms when they move in and at time of renewal. I think it's a really good idea, we support the bill strongly.

Number three is Senate Bill 108 which deals with school choice programs and the rental assistance program, I think is a very good way to tie housing and education together.

The reason we have a case like Sheff v. O'Neill is because you have municipal education districts combined with housing is to a significant extent segregated or at least very different based on what town you're in and it results then with an impact on the schools. This is the way to pilot out some ways of linking housing and school choice together.

Number four is House Bill number 5126 which deals with late charges. Move-in, move-out checkoff lists and an ombudsman for the Department of Housing.

We support the bill if it is with some changes in wording. My written testimony is specific about what those changes would need to be.

And just for your knowledge, the Department of Housing once did have a condo conversion ombudsman. No longer funded, no longer there. Many years ago. But it's not unheard of that the department do that.

Bill number five for me is House Bill 5121 which is the child daycare bill which we support. It address -- it builds off of the existing law, zoning law, which prohibits discrimination against family and group daycare and also makes sure that it's -- that it is something that is not blocked by the landlord so that renters can also do this.

And finally, Senate Bill 110 which deals with expanded areas of operation for Housing Authorities and I'll just say we support the bill.

Thank you, I realize me time has run out. I'll be happy to answer questions on any of those things if you have them.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Rafie, thank you. So I don't have any questions for you because you and I talk -- we talk often. I want to thank you publicly for your work. Your ability to literally be a housing walking dictionary on just about every statute. I mean you name it, you can rattle it off and I remember taking over this particular seat right after the illustrious Larry Butler who's been a great mentor as well -- you -- you got it man.

And you've been at it a long time and don't let them tell you that you're old. You're a young guy with a lot of wisdom and all jokes aside but I really do appreciate your assistance on this committee and really fighting for the most vulnerable. I don't care who they are, you -- you are there and you represent Legal Aid and not only for colleagues but you, sir. Thank you. Any comments, questions?  
Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and I wanna follow along those lines and I mean we're

gonna compliment you so much you're gonna start blushing.

But Rafie, you have been an incredible source of information not only from a standpoint of housing but also of legal services. You are one of the stalwarts that I go to to get some advice and I don't know if the current generation of people fully understand that you were on the 8-30(g) Blue Ribbon Panel that initiated the legislation that we always bat around quite often.

So I seek your counsel and insight and you have always been a resource, you are indeed valued and I also had exposure to your expertise in the government administration and elections committee in which you kind of partook in.

So I wanna echo the Chairman's effusive appreciation of your contribution to the dialog. So keep on going on and we're very grateful to have your input and I value it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Senator Hwang.  
Representative Rose.

REP. ROSE (118TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Rafie, I am serving my last term and you were absolutely the first person that I called when I got into my office in Hartford. And I appreciate the work that you did with me. We didn't always always agree but we -- we were always able to talk. And I appreciate that so very much, especially being a young fresh new legislator not knowing what I was doing.

So now I'm a seasoned legislator, I still don't know what I'm doing. [Laughter] But Rafie, thank you

again so much for all of your guidance over the years. I'm gonna miss ya'.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Man, what a way to share news with us. We didn't know -- anyway we'll talk later.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Just for clarification, she's the one who's leaving, I'm not. [Crosstalk and laughter]

REP. MCGEE (5TH): We know you're not leaving, I just thought it was appropriate and yeah. So thank you. Any other comments or questions?  
Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72ND): Thank you. I do wanna join my colleagues and thank you for -- for all your institutional knowledge. It's been a pleasure working with you on all these issues over the years but I do have a specific question.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Thank you for asking me a question. Thank you.

REP. BUTLER (72ND): Yes. Yes.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I was trying to get around that, man.

REP. BUTLER (72ND): At any rate, for Senate Bill 105, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A RIGHT TO HOUSING, and you mentioned that you would probably like to see that, you know, evolve into something else to address, you know, homelessness and housing a little differently. How would you rather see this pursued?

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Well, I think -- to some extent I agree with the previous speaker, talked about the three sort of the pro homeless, before homelessness,

homelessness and after homelessness. But I would sort of look at the task of writing a bill to maybe frame it in a different way so that homeless is not the -- homelessness is not the center of the bill. Affordable housing is really the center of the bill.

These things all interrelate because if you're ultimately gonna cure homelessness, you have to have affordable housing that the people can move to and the use of rental assistance is at the very center of that.

In order to make housing affordable, whether it's new housing or especially if it's older existing housing, if it's housing that landlords maintain in lower income communities, the ability to provide enough subsidies so the people can afford to live there is key to solving all the problems go around a right to housing.

So the bill's framed as a right to housing but it tends to talk about homelessness. It should do that but it should also talk more about housing. And that may require that it be targeted. There are statutes that we already have that talk about income groups. People whose income is below 25 percent of median. People whose income is between 25 and 50. Between 50 and 75 -- 50 and 80.

The people who have to maintain housing and have incomes below 50 percent of median are a category that needs to be targeted in any kind of a right to housing bill.

So I think there are ways to reframe it. In the absence of large amounts of money, you're not gonna end up passing any bill on it. But you can frame it

as a bill that's sort of goal-oriented. This is where we are trying to get to.

Anyway, so I think you can do that but I think that it needs to be worked through over the next two, three weeks. And I think if you put some people together you can do that.

As I said, the latter parts of the bill, I think, are sort of a whole different topic and require a different kind of -- they present their own problems and I think you -- I would urge you to focus on section one of the bill. And I think you could maybe put something together that would work.

REP. BUTLER (72ND): Thank you. Thank you for your answer but I'll talk offline about some of these other issues because it could probably be a lengthy conversation but again, thank you for all of your wealth of information that you've shared with us over the years to help us come up with reasonable and fair policy for the whole state of Connecticut.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Representative Zullo.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Thank you. Just a follow-up question on 5121, group and family child care homes. I'm looking at this from the perspective that, you know, group family child care is kind of like a customary home occupation. Something, a provision like that, that you'd see in a lot of zoning regulations.

I'm just curious if I'm reading section four -- or paragraph four of section three correctly -- that that paragraph would literally strip municipalities

of any right to treat those uses differently from single and multifamily dwellings.

Is that how I'm reading it?

RAFIE PODOLSKY: First of all, could you tell me -- tell me again where you -- could you set the line number, that would be helpful.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Oh, absolutely. Lines 252 to 256. And I can give you the example or [crosstalk] one thinking of that comes to mind. If it's helpful.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Sure, go ahead.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): I'm just thinking of the situation where I wanna operate a group child -- I want to run a group child care operation. I want people to know I'm doing it. I have a very small lot so I put an eight-foot by two-foot sign on my, you know, 20-foot frontage front lawn.

And I'm wondering, does a municipality have the right to regulate that? Or does this proposed bill strip the municipality of the right to do that because that's not something that's regulated for single and family -- multifamily dwellings. It's not addressed in a lot of zoning regulations with respect to those types of dwellings.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: I think I'm gonna have to say I'm not sure I know the answer to that. The -- I've read this as those lines, 252 to 256 -- as being related to lines, if I can find them for you quickly, 125 to 126 which -- which are designed with this part of an amendment to 8-2 which was designed to prevent the use of sort of collateral reasons to get around with the established state prohibition

against zoning discrimination in the residential areas of -- of family day care and group day care homes.

So I think the answer is that's not what it's intended to do but I think that you're entitled to a better answer than that and I'd be happy to try and get back to you. There may be other witnesses here who might be in a position -- still coming -- who might be in a position to answer that question.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Because I'm thinking of it from the safety perspective that I don't want, you know, an eight-foot or a ten-foot sign going up that makes the line of sight coming out of driveways next to these properties a danger.

And then I'm taking it one step further and thinking -- well, I also don't want somebody necessarily putting up a bright neon yellow sign in my residential neighborhood that lights up at night.

And I'm thinking to myself, why wouldn't a municipality have the right to regulate these very simple things? I get the concept that we want to promote and preserve these uses and -- and prevent pretextual, you know -- you know, action that forecloses people being able to do these things.

On the same token I think that municipalities do have at least some right to, you know, ensure that the residential character of these neighborhoods is preserved.

But I want to make sure that this statute doesn't foreclose that right entirely.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: As you're speaking, I'm looking at this again and I think -- I think this does not do what you're worried about it doing.

It says if the group -- if the group child care home complies with all local codes and ordinances applicable to single and multifamily dwellings, the -- the -- it seems to me that what you're talking about would be something that -- a special rule for group -- for group day care homes that where if this were a multifamily dwelling it would be permitted but if it's a group -- if it is a group day care home, it would not.

It seems to me that's what this is trying to get at. When something is not permitted, for example it's a code that does not permit signs. Or does not permit lighted signs or neon signs and presumably that code would also apply to multifamily or single family for that matter, then this in no way would prohibit the town from applying it to a group home.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Okay.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: That's my understanding. It's -- again, I can try and look at it further if you want me to.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): I'd appreciate it. I'll also do a little bit more homework. I've been trying to find the answer this whole time but you seem like -- given all the praise that's been laid upon you, you seem like the perfect person -- [Crosstalk].

RAFIE PODOLSKY: You know, I never said thank you for the praise but it's -- you played it out exactly what the right limit is, is that people expect too much. Assuming you know things that you don't know

and so I -- well, I'm flattered and indeed embarrassed.

But so I'll do the best I can on this.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): I'm also just thinking of it from the perspective that so many times the mechanism for regulating these types of issues that I just brought up is a special permit or a special exception process that would apply to single and multiple family dwellings.

And if on one hand you have a statute that's saying no, you cannot subject these uses to special permits or special exception processes and yet you have other regulations that allow you to regulate these things like, you know, again parking signs, things that might actually impair the residential character of a neighborhood -- I just want to make sure that we're doing what we want to do with this but we're not stripping municipalities of the right to regulate very basic common sense things.

That's all I want to make sure with this and I'll do my homework, too. So thank you.

RAFE PODOLSKY: Okay thank you. And one thing since you asked this question, one thing I want to mention, section two, when it was drafted by the legislative commissioner's office, includes sort of a technical reorganization of 8-2, the same -- the technical aspects of that are also in a bill that's in the Planning and Development Committee.

If you'll just be aware as to whether that belongs in this bill or does not belong in the bill. But you'll see a lot of brackets and underlining and

you'll -- in almost all of that, anything that's bracketed out is put back with underlining.

So it's important you know that those that are technical changed and not [Inaudible 03:09:48].

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Question for you, sir. We've talked quite a bit in regards to the -- and Representative Zullo was very articulate as a kind of a zoning attorney in asking you some of the questions.

What would you say would be a solution to the zoning regulations and concerns to kind of address community local concerns about traffic and density but also the definition term of homebased care versus the larger group child care facilities that we're talking about greater than 12 or so.

What solution would you suggest to reach a compromise on that?

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Well, this bill doesn't deal with any kind of group daycare that's more than -- more than 12 children. There are different licenses for different -- for different types based on the number of children.

So I think this bill deliberately tries to work from a comparison with single and multifamily housing as distinct from commercial facilities. Things you would think of as commercial facilities.

And so nothing -- I believe that nothing in this bill addresses those larger size -- a larger size group home that might have 20 or 25 or 30 kids.

This is -- family is the one to six and group is the seven to 12 kid units. And so I think -- I don't think they raise the same problems that a larger facility might raise and arguably a larger facility might -- might be more like to the conventional business.

So I don't think -- I don't think that's really a problem here.

REP. HWANG (28TH): And I always love reading your testimonies because you don't just cover one. You cover them all. So could you elaborate a little bit more on Senate Bill 105, the right to housing? And you support with some changes. And I don't know if I missed it as we were in and out. What would be some of the suggested changes you would make in that language and in the intent of that? I'd just like to get some more clarification for that. Thank you, sir.

RAFIE POTOLSKY: This is something I said earlier. The primary changes I would make would be in section -- the primary -- I would make my primary change to section one and try and broaden it in certain ways and narrow it in other ways.

But the broadening, to make clear we're talking about all housing and not just in relation to homelessness. The -- but to focus it better on -- on the needs of the lowest income households.

That was my -- for sections two through ten, what the bill does is it borrows the small -- I'm not sure what the official title is, but the Small Business Protection Act which is designed to keep small businesses from being overregulated.

And I think there's a place for that in this kind of a bill in relationship to the development of housing because one of the complaints in Affordable Housing Development has long been that the rules and regulations are too burdensome. And slow down the process.

But those are mainly municipal rules and regulations like local zoning boards. They're not so much state. But there are certainly complaints that it takes too long to get through things for the Department of Housing. So to the extent that it's talking about that, that might make some sense in this bill.

But when regulations -- there's a tone that we need to get of regulations. But here you have -- your focus is the residents of housing and regulations are designed to protect the residents of housing.

So if the purpose of those extra sections becomes to make it easier not to protect the residents because the argument would go we're putting too much burden on the property owner. Then that's gonna be the exact opposite -- or could be -- the opposite of what the bill's designed to do.

Because you're borrowing a statute that has one purpose and you're trying to apply it to a different purpose to -- to housing. So I think there are areas where it does apply, particularly in housing development, but the areas where I would be very cautious when it's talking about the rights of residents. And you would not want to be passing a law that's designed to discourage people from protecting the rights of residents because that's at the core of the right to housing.

So that was my suggestion -- my suggestion was to work with section one. Leave it -- just don't worry about it, make sections two through [Inaudible 03:14:47] but work with section one to get something that sort of reflects what people have talked about. There was a big press conference a week ago on the right to housing. And make that the focus of the bill.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): I just saw the Chairman's reaction when you said that. An interesting thought that we'll have more conversations on.

It's fascinating that you talk about the consumer, right? And shareholders in this. Where's the landlord in this talk of right to housing? In the conversation. Where do they fit in this as part of the equation?

RAFIE POTOLSKY: This is really win/win. I mean it's one of the reasons I talk about the -- that I think rental assistance programs are so important. Whether it's the Federal Section 8 program or -- we're one of the small number of states that has its own state rental assistance program, RAP.

And that's because it's very difficult -- I mean I have no disagreement with landlords, particularly that serve the low income community that is very difficult to run housing with people -- occupied by people who have very low income because if you raise the rents, maybe to really cover what the true costs are, you end up defaulting on the rent.

If you bring the rents down to be affordable to somebody who's living on \$12,000 or \$13,000 or \$14,000 or \$15,000 dollars a year, you end up with

not enough of a cash flow to be able to maintain the building.

And then you may get regulated in the sense you're told to fix your building because we have certain minimum standards. We have housing codes. You're not allowed to rent things out below -- below housing code standards.

And the way you fix that is you have to put more money into the system. That -- it's not -- it's not fair to either tenants or landlords if you don't inject enough money in the system that somebody can properly manage property and have enough money to do that and residents who live in that property get a decent place to live.

So -- so it seems to me this is not -- and landlords are right in the center of a right to housing because they're a key housing proprietor. Just like housing authorities are housing providers. So to a much larger extent so are private landlords.

But you don't have to -- you don't have to make it a conflict between the provider and the resident. And one of the things I've learned is that's one of the areas where landlords and tenants are able to come together.

I mean I've had a lot of meetings over the years with landlords and you know, we get into -- we argue about eviction stuff all the time because we have very different interests and we see it very differently.

But we find a lot of common ground when we're looking at making it fiscally financially possible to be a provider of housing. And to me the right --

so that's got to be an essential piece of a right to housing. A right to housing is decent housing for the people who live in it with the capacity for providers to provide it. And for a level of affordability that people can -- that people can have.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): I appreciate hearing that and that is what we should evolve to do. All the shareholders and -- you mentioned about the voucher systems. Are you thinking that the burden should be borne by either the local municipality, the state or the Federal government?

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Well, I think the governmental responsibility, what level it's at --

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Which one?

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Well, you know, if -- I would say -- I would put things primarily at the Federal level because they have the broadest revenue base.

Here think of something analogous. We have a food stamp program. Food stamps are really important. What are they? They essentially a system to help people pay for food who don't have enough money to be able to afford what we think is the minimum level of food that you need to have.

And you know, and we've used different voucher type things or credit using electronic cards. I mean there are different ways you can dispense, you know, dispense the funds. There are eligibility requirements for it but it's a universal system. If you are income eligible for food stamps, you will get food stamps.

If you're income eligible for housing assistance, you won't get it because we have a -- we have a limited amount of money that's made available for housing assistance and only the lucky ones who won the lottery, kind of, will be able to get -- to get those benefits.

So I would say work towards a more universal system. Who's gonna fund it? I think it's easiest to fund it at the national level but why do we have a state rental assistance program in Connecticut? Why does Massachusetts have a state rental assistance program? Because there are not enough Section 8 vouchers that are provided by the federal government to do the job. And there are still not enough even adding these together. We're still only a fairly small percentage -- I'm not sure what it is but it's something like maybe 30 percent -- of the population that's income eligible actually with housing subsidies.

So you know, we have to be -- obviously we're aware of the cost implications but -- I don't know. I'm sorry, I'm going on. I don't know if I'm answering your question or not.

I would start at the highest level. I would put the least burden on the municipality, the middle burden on the state, the highest burden on the Federal government and it's all because it has the broadest base. Therefore it can raise the money from the widest variety of sources.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): I appreciate that, thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Rafie, for your testimony and your feedback, that was a good touch.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Sara Fox?

SARA FOX: Good afternoon everyone. And thanks to Representative McGee and Senator Anwar and all the distinguished members of the Housing Committee.

My name is Sara Fox and I direct the Advocacy and Community Impact for the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness.

I'm here on a couple of bills. Most importantly, the right to establish a right to housing. And I just want to call out a few things that we've heard before here today.

This bill reads right now as a right to shelter which presents some concerns to us. Most chiefly that a right to shelter sort of -- well, it steps away from where we've been headed but it also puts an onus on the state and in states where it is litigated like Massachusetts and New York, they bear a huge financial burden.

Our state has used every dollar wisely to divert people from coming into homelessness, to rapidly end their period of homelessness and to get them housed as quickly as possible.

A real right to housing means to us at Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness and our partners through the Reaching Home campaign -- supporting the efforts to date.

Right now just to give you a clear understanding of what I'm talking about, our homelessness response system diverts over 5,000 households from shelter each year. But that's only about 40 percent of the households that show up at our appointments and our communities.

For those who we cannot divert, who wind up in our shelters, our system focuses to match them to available Rapid Re-Housing units as quickly as possible.

But that being said, these units are few and far between so the lottery that Rafie was just speaking to is very -- is very true. We are under resourced and that has an impact on the work that we're able to do and on our efforts to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and one time for Connecticut's residents.

We also just want to raise up the fact that eviction prevention is a huge key in ending homelessness. But that said, it's one -- it's a piece of a puzzle. A right to housing will ensure that every household who's on the brink of homelessness receives a problem-solving conversation, housing navigation and access to flexible financial assistance to help them avoid homelessness.

Oftentimes when we think of prevention and what has happened in the past has been that prevention has been targeted towards those who perhaps might have a housing crisis and it's really hard to best target those dollars effectively.

So we just want to raise up the fact that more investments in shelter diversion is something that we are fully in support of and more investments in

flexible funding because we're seeing that that his working in every community across the state.

We also are opposed to the act establishing a taskforce concerning various issues at homeless shelters. While we support all of the intents of the bill, many of these functions are already taking place through the Department of Housing. They're also legislated at the Federal level and there are pieces that have been put in place.

There are ways that we can do better as a state where we can come together to ensure and we are working on them every day to ensure that we can accommodate service animals, that we are insuring equal access to LGBTQ families of all sizes.

And that work takes place in every community across the state and there's no question that there are some shelters that need to raise up and we're providing them with technical assistance and we also work closely with the Department of Housing to help better all of our residents so we can all rise up together.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you so much, Sara, and thank you for the work that you do.

I was really interested in that -- an agency that represents a coalition to end homelessness. You're saying you oppose a task force to just -- that are here from constituencies on some of the barriers that they're faced with.

I've gotta say a round-table discussion, I think you were there. Quite a few representatives from various shelters or at least advocacy groups mentioned some of the challenges that they're faced

with and to take that conversation a step further, we had a meeting with DOH and some of the questions that we had, they couldn't answer.

And whether or not they're doing it, we didn't ask. We just said we wanted to learn a bit more on how to provide better supports, perhaps even put forth some legislation if needed, if necessary.

But you're saying you're -- you're opposed to it altogether because you're already doing it.

SARA FOX: Well, what I'm saying is that we have -- these things that have been brought forward in the bill are areas of work that are already taking place in each of our coordinated access networks.

They're also areas that are -- that were federally funded to insure. And there's also an issue where there are -- there are shelters that are neither state funded or federally funded and those shelters, it's really hard to make changes within and so we do our best to provide technical assistance and training.

I'm not saying -- and so I don't want you to misunderstand -- that the idea of a task force is fine but a lot of these things have already been put in place so I'm just asking that, you know, that we continue our work and we work to better and strengthen our community's response in these areas.

And so I'm not diminishing the importance of any of it at all, I'm just saying that, you know, sometimes those shelters who we're working the hardest with, it takes a lot of technical assistance and support to sort of help them turn the curve.

And we've seen that some shelters that, you know, housing first and the debate that's happening at the Federal level today. To get to where we are today, it took a lot of time and a lot of training and support with our shelters to get where we are.

And oftentimes it's that direct technical assistance that needs to take place in communities. So perhaps it is more assistance and sort of helping to ensure that that's taking place and the conversation is wonderful but I think we know what we need to put in place, we just need some of the resources to do so.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Got it.

SARA FOX: And so in a state where we have relatively dis-invested and not invested, you know, we've had -- faced relatively dis-invest -- my words are jumbled and I'm the mom of a newborn so hold on a second.

In a state where we have space recisions and our shelters are doing the best they possibly can and often are very underfunded as Kelly Ann Day referred to earlier.

You know, some of these things, you know, we're trying to make sure they happen in whenever the can when things come to -- when things come forward or someone's denied access to shelter, we're working on it and we're working closely with providers to address it.

And so I want you to know like it's not saying that -- it's just saying that perhaps we could focus and target our efforts in a different way. But investments in ending homelessness and the work and the resources to ensure that we're able to deliver

the best services possible to people as they -- as we're also concurrently working to ensure that their experience of homelessness is rare, brief and one time.

Like that's what I'm saying. Like that's what takes precedence to me. The right to housing and the right to housing as what it means, that -- that means something. You know, we're trying not to turn away people. We're trying to ensure that people who are -- who are coming through, you know, who are justice impacted are also getting housed and getting rapidly housed.

So it's just -- it's really just being focused and targeted in our work and I'm afraid that this might take us away from some of the key strategies that not only the Reaching Home campaign is working on but that we are as well.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Yeah, no and I appreciate that. I think for us and I could speak on behalf of the Committee, we -- we were discussing so many barriers that individuals are faced with when they seek shelter. From, you know, youth, transgender, to ADA compliant shelters or shelters who should be ADA compliant.

I mean the list just went on. Individuals who have a background check and they're denied because of various reasons. Protection at the shelter level. I mean there were so many questions and we did ask DOH and they were very, very helpful in the conversation. But we ended the conversation with, "Well, maybe we should have some sort of a task force that could bring together all of these -- these providers, your organization and others to

help us to come -- come up with some ideas or at least to answer the questions that we have.

But I hear you loud and clear and I appreciate the work that you do on behalf of so many people. I look forward to working with you.

Any questions, comments from the Committee? No? Thank you so much, Sara.

SARA FOX: I just want to say thank you for bringing forward all these bills. It's the first time we've had real hope that we are gonna be able to end homelessness in Connecticut. So we appreciate the work that you're all doing as well.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Kevin Alvarez.

KEVIN ALVAREZ: Hello. Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for having me here today. I'm sorry I did not submit written testimony because I only learned about this meeting today. But I'm happy to afterwards.

The reason that I'm here is my name's Kevin Alvarez, I'm the Director of Legislative Affairs for the city of New Haven. Mayor Elicker and his most recent -- or his first State of the City address laid out housing policy as really -- if not the -- one of the highest policy priority of the administration and we are very grateful for this committee and the members of it, particularly the Chairman, for how aggressive they are pursuing -- addressing the housing challenges that the state is facing.

And it's -- the way that we're looking at housing right now is twofold. First in the vital need to create new housing, particularly affordable housing and deeply affordable housing because what is

affordable to some is not affordable to all. And also improving existing housing stock.

So in that regard, I think we would like support H.B. 5123 regarding rental unit safety. It's critical for municipalities to be able to both be responsive and proactive in ensuring the quality of their housing and ensuring rental unit safety so we are very strongly in support of that bill.

And regarding housing overall, municipalities need to be proactive, they need to do everything they can to create more affordable housing and a lot of what's been discussed here today regarding the housing bill -- the right to housing legislation which we very much support the efforts behind it and look to continue working with you.

But a lot of the conversation has been around we need to build more affordable housing as you stated, Mr. Chairman. And that is a vital need both for New Haven and for all of our surrounding towns in the state as a whole.

Right now, 30 percent of our housing stock is affordable while each of our neighbors is at best between five and seven percent, many of whom are quite a bit lower in their percentage of housing stock that is affordable.

And one of the ways that we hope is taken up by this committee either as a standalone bill or as part of a piece of legislation already existing is the creation of regional affordable housing trust funds. I mentioned this idea to the Chairman very briefly and we've been working on it for the past several weeks but essentially creating a mechanism -- a funding mechanism -- by which through a surcharge on

building permit fees could create an affordable housing fund, nine of which through each of the council government regions throughout the state -- that would essentially allow for municipalities to tap into that money to incentivize them to build their own affordable housing.

So it's not just concentrated in our larger cities but is expanded into the areas that often have a lot of trouble in funding these things. And I'm happy to answer questions about that or follow up with any of you afterwards but I don't wanna exceed the time too much.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you so much, Kevin. Could you elaborate a little bit more on that regional trust fund that you mentioned just shortly?

KEVIN ALVAREZ: Yes. So essentially the goal of this is to, as everybody is talking about, is to build more affordable housing. And the hardest thing to really address in that is that we don't have any money to do that with.

So this would be a small surcharge on existing building permit fees for each of the towns in the state. That would then go into a regional fund that would -- that any of those towns could access and it would be sort of regionally administered. But any of those towns could access in order to incentivize them to build more affordable housing.

We don't want this to be something where it's just the largest cities because they'll have the largest building permit fees in subsidizing those small towns but them really working together. There's a piece of legislation that's before the Committee,

S.B. 110 which would be expanding the Housing Authority jurisdiction of major cities which we would, of course, support but I think we really want to be collaborative with our neighbors and try to figure out how do we look at a larger regional scale at developing the affordable housing stock that -- that we need.

So this is one part of a larger, more comprehensive agenda that we're trying to pursue. On the municipal side we have inclusionary zoning and several other measures but this was one piece of trying to incentivize that growth.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Give me -- give me an example of how housing authorities could, you know, invest into this -- this regional fund. Layman's terms. Like how -- how would it work? How would it work?

KEVIN ALVAREZ: So I think the -- an easy example would be if there is an existing -- because New Haven has a couple of these now -- where we're working with the developer where particularly around inclusionary zoning where some of -- many of the units will be at market rate and then some of them will be affordable. A lot of those projects will have a gap in the funding because there's an enormous cost in having affordable units in there.

And so the municipality could apply to the -- essentially in the way that we're designing it would be a subcommittee of council of governments where they would be able to apply for this funding and that regional sort of body would be able to decide how those funds were allocated.

Does that -- is that --

REP. MCGEE (5TH): For me, yes. Thank you. I don't know if any other member on the committee have a question. Representative Gonzalez and then Representative Zullo.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Good afternoon.

KEVIN ALVAREZ: Good afternoon.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): I would like to know when you say affordable housing, what is for you affordable housing? What that mean?

KEVIN ALVAREZ: So I love that question because that's also what's so critical about this is what is affordable to some is not affordable to everybody. We are talking about deeply affordable housing is our priority as the city of New Haven which is -- so some of affordable housing units are up to, I believe, it's 80 percent of area median income. Where we are -- ideally, our goal for New Haven would be around 30 percent of area median income.

Where there's a highest need. However, how that -- how that shakes out amongst a region might be different than that and I don't have all the answers to that. But that's for the city of New Haven, our top priority.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Okay, give me -- let's talk -- you know, in numbers. We'll say affordable, a family of four. Of how much the salary, you know, between what and what. Don't -- let's forget about the 80 percent, just give me the right numbers.

KEVIN ALVAREZ: So I don't have them in front of me so I will follow up -- I'm more than happy to follow up with you afterwards and provide those numbers. I just don't want to say anything that's incorrect

because I'm not looking at them right now and I'm not positive off the top of my head.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Yeah. And I would like to know, you know why? Because when -- when people say affordable housing -- oh yeah, we need affordable housing, affordable housing. We have to look for funds, how bad, da da da.

And that's, you know, when we find out that affordable housing is a person that is between making between \$50,000 and \$80,000 dollars, and in some occasions it's more.

So in our community, in the, in the minority community, the poor community -- hey, \$50,000 dollars is good. It's a steak every day, you know. Like you know, running in our community is like what -- \$25,000, salary between \$25,000, \$30,000, \$35,000. And sometimes that doesn't fit into affordable housing.

So that's why I need to know because affordable housing for you could be, you know, different than what I'm looking for in affordable housing. And that's very, very important, you know. If we -- you know, realize later they are interested in that if we decided to have the [Inaudible 03:38:43], you know, we have to be sure that what is affordable housing for you guys.

KEVIN ALVAREZ: Yes and we completely agree with that. If you watched the Mayor when he was campaigning, that was like the beginning of every one of his stump speeches.

So I -- we completely agree on the priority of making sure that it is deeply affordable and

affordable for people that actually are most in need.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Yeah and nothing against anybody, nothing against the Mayor. You know, your Mayor, my Mayor or anybody's, it's not -- but you know, when they are campaigning, they offer a lot of things and then in reality when they win they forget about what they really offered to the community.

KEVIN ALVAREZ: Yes.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): But thank you very much and I would like to know those numbers. Okay.

KEVIN ALVAREZ: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Representative Zullo.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Just very quickly, help me understand the process one more time. Are you talking about a situation where a developer comes in an already leverages like FlexFunds, you know, CHAPA funds and then still has a gap so municipality applies on behalf of the developer or the developer applies?

Or are you talking about a situation where a municipality according to housing authority, you know, or wants to open up another housing authority applies directly to council of governments. Or both.

KEVIN ALVAREZ: So I think our focus so far has been on just ensuring that there's the source of funds there.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Okay.

KEVIN ALVAREZ: The exact way -- and we're eager to work with you on exactly what that means. We had outlined a few different mechanisms or things that we had thought of that this money would be able to specifically address. Specifically pertaining to the municipality but I'm happy to have that conversation further and to work with the Committee on the exact design of this program so that we get it right.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Because my only thought process as far as getting it to be able to apply as universally as possible is for a community like East Haven where we don't really operate our own housing programs. You know, if you were to tailor that program simply so that a municipality could apply so that it could open an additional housing authority, you know, or fund that kind of project, it would actually exclude a small community like East Haven where in the alternative, if you're talking about a program where a municipality can apply along with the developer to close a gap in funding, you know, where a developer is going to be building affordable housing, that would actually be more inclusive bringing towns like East Haven, smaller towns in that don't operate housing authorities and to actually be able to participate in that.

So I'm just thinking that if you're gonna continue to pursue it, maybe also keep that in mind. Because it'll make it easier to -- 'cuz in towns like East Haven it's a good thing to do.

KEVIN ALVAREZ: Absolutely and that's really -- being inclusionary about this is -- is the entire reason that we started working on it was to make sure that towns like East Haven, like our neighbors

who have their own challenges, were able to have something that would support them as well. Particularly around the creation of affordable housing so we absolutely want to make sure that it's as inclusive as possible in the design of the program.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Thank you.

KEVIN ALVAREZ: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Kevin.

KEVIN ALVAREZ: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you for your testimony. Next up, Eva Bernuda and Merrill Gay.

[Background conversation]

No, we just added Merrill so I was just like Eva Bernuda, Merrill. No, that's not it.

EVA BERNUDA: No, I didn't add another name. So thank you Chairman McGee and fellow legislators for having us here today.

I'm here in capacity twofold. One, I am a landlord here in the city of Hartford but I'm also the Child Care Director for CSEA SEIU Local 2001, also a handful.

We represent right now over 4,000 childcare providers based in the home and throughout the state of Connecticut and we also have childcare centers.

We are here in support of bill 5121 and this is a zoning bill that would allow some clarifications and some easier access with zoning regulations in municipalities. We are in support of this bill because right now with 50,000 children who do not

have -- are not in care here throughout the state of Connecticut, we need other measures that allow for childcare providers easier access to create the licensing childcare homes without cumbersome regulations of zoning regulations coming down on them.

So I'm gonna pass the mic here to Merrill.

MERRILL GAY: Hi, I'm Merrill Gay, I'm the Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. We have about 100 members across the state representing a broad spectrum of childcare and child serving organizations.

We support Senate Bill -- or House Bill 5121 because this is designed to try and eliminate some barriers that have kept people from opening up family childcare and to grow their program from a family childcare to a group childcare.

The difference there -- I just want everyone to make sure they understand -- is we're not talking about a bigger building, we're just talking about a family childcare where they hire an assistant so they can care for some more children as long as the space that they've got is big enough under the licensing rules.

So for instance, you're a family daycare provider, you've got four kids during the day, two of them are under two and you have one who's coming out -- or a couple who are coming after school.

Now one of your parents calls you up and says, "We're pregnant, I'm gonna have twins. Can you watch my kids?"

Well, you're not going to be able to do that because you have -- you already have two kids under two. But if you hired an assistant if your space is big enough and OEC with license, then you would be able to now watch those babies who are about to get born and you know, older siblings.

So it's not talking about a bigger space. We're -- frequently we're talking about families who walk their kids. I know when my kids were little, we were lucky enough to have a home daycare around the corner and I could drop my five-year-old at the bus stop and then walk my two-year-old over to the home daycare.

And then my five-year-old came home from school and went to the home daycare and we picked her up at the end of the day. Picked both of them up at the end of the day.

That works fine to make this as easy as possible to expand the supply of childcare because we only have enough licensed spot for infants and toddlers to serve 27 of every 100 children.

You know, in places like Hartford it's 19 licensed slots. In New Britain it's nine licensed slots per 100 kids. We have a huge shortage of infant/toddler care and home day care and group family care is the easiest way to expand that supply.

EVA BERNUDA: And just really quickly, I forgot to mention that SEIU does have child care insurance through Assure Insurance and there has not been ever a complication with Assure to insure childcare providers in addition to their homeowners insurance or their tenant insurance. Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you so much for your perspective on this -- this issue and to clarify the size of the actual day care or child care facility. I know that's been a lot of the questions today or at least a pushback. Traffic and all the others.

But Representative Gonzalez is waving me down. She has some questions for you.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you for coming. I have a question. Do you know how much the daycare -- those daycares -- they charge per child?

EVA BERNUDA: We can both answer that. If you're going through the Care for Kids program, it's on a sliding scale. When you're looking at different regions throughout the state, the lowest for licensed providers, you're looking at around -- again, it's also by week -- and so it's by week, how many hours a week the childcare provider performs, what region they live in and in addition to that, how many children they care for.

So for one child in Fairfield County, for example, you're looking at \$350 a week for maximum care. If you have additional kids, so you can have six kids plus three. So six all day and then three before school, three after school so a provider could be making anywhere -- a licensed provider could be making anywhere between \$35,000 dollars all the way to \$100,000 dollars but that's payment through the business and that's not including deductions.

So remember, you have to take deductions off, you're looking at maybe an additional 40 percent of that

money being deductible because it's their business. It's a wide range.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Thank you.

MERRILL GAY: Yeah, the average weekly rate in greater Hartford is \$305 dollars per week.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Three hundred and five.

MERRILL GAY: Three hundred and five dollars, that's Care for Kids looks at 50 percent of the median -- so 50 percent of the cost. Or the 50th percentile, I should say. So it's the median cost for infant/toddler care in a home child care -- or in a center is \$305. What is it --

EVA BERNUDA: Fairfield's \$350. If you look at the national cost for child care in a center or a licensed provider in the home, it could cost a family more than \$375 dollars a week.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Three-seventy-five a week for one child.

EVA BERNUDA: For one child.

MERRILL GAY: So you know, that's why we need a Care for Kids program because most people can't afford that much money.

EVA BERNUDA: Some -- yeah, some providers who are not in the subsidy program -- so let's say if you're in the subsidy program, you are not allowed to charge one low-income child one amount and then one non-low-income child another amount.

So let's say the parent who is well off and leaves that child with you, you charge them \$475 and then you have a Care for Kids child and you wanna charge

them \$350, no. That's -- that's illegal. You have to charge the same amount.

But there are providers out there who never take subsidy because they wanna be able to have a livable wage and they do charge \$450 and they do charge \$425. The Care for Kids providers which are the majority of our in-home daycare providers in the state charge \$320, \$305. And they charge way below what they're supposed to charge because they know that the families can't pay the difference that Care for Kids ask the parent to pay, that's called the Parent Provider Fee.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Now when you said \$350, that's -- that's including whatever the state is paying or that's something --

MERRIL GAY: That's including -- so there's the set rate and then the parent is paying a percentage of their income of that total.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Oh, okay. Okay, thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you both for your testimony.

EVA BERNUDA: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): All right, Sean Ghio? Oh, he's not here? Okay. Marc Gottes -- Gottestein, there you go.

MARC GOTTESDIENER: I spoke last year, I'm a member on the Board of the CCOPO, the County Coalition of Property Owners. Also on the Association of Connecticut Real Estate Investors.

I've been in the real estate field for nearly 43 years. I lived on Russ [phonetic] Street and before

you folks had this lovely legislation office building, I was responsible for saving the Bond Restaurant building on the corner of Russ and Broad Street because that's where you guys -- not you guys but your predecessors -- used to go to lunch on the corner of Broad and Russ because there was no building as beautiful as this.

So I got tired of seeing the savage nomad gang in the early 1980s tearing apart that historical 14,000 square foot four-story building and I, with Linda Bare's [phonetic] blessing, God bless her, she's passed. But I was able in my 20's to get funding to do affordable housing for three and four-bedroom units and save that building.

And I've been on Buckingham Street for over four decades and I've seen housing because I've owned 140 units, mostly apartments but I now only own 40 units because being a landlord is not easy. And I've been to housing court 40 times as a real estate appraiser, a certified appraiser. I've testified a couple hundred times in court.

So I have a very good knowledge and I'm very friendly with Rafie, I've known Rafie for almost 40 years and we do see eye-to-eye on many issues.

For instance, I have not received my Section 8 subsidies from one agency yet. Today's the 18th of the month and I could start eviction on that tenant on the 10th or 11th. And I haven't received that money because there's no oversight on the state level.

We don't need a state ombudsman for one of these things that require inspections. Each court, if someone is serious to pay their rent or they have an

issue with their landlord, they can go to the court and make that arrangement. We don't need more regulations. In general, because I've seen it all, regulations can be good if they're properly done.

Now in general we oppose all these bills as written. But we were willing to work on all of the bills if there's a consensus. That's all it's about. We believe there should be a right to housing but on page one it says, "We have to connect the payment of rent, utility arrearages, legal support of residents facing eviction."

If we can do that, landlords are happy to work with it. I don't wanna charge a late fee to someone. I'd rather have somebody pay their rent on time.

In general, there's a lot of good features with this. But it has to be tied that both sides are accountable, okay? That's bill number 105 that we're basically in favor of. Everybody has a right to housing.

The 5188, in general, instead of hiring more legal lawyers -- because I've been going to court since I've been 15. Get budgeting. Get people to help people that need to understand budgeting who may not be able to understand it.

Getting lawyers and getting into the system ties the system down. We need people to get help with their budgets. Anything that's gonna cause more regulations means the landlord has to charge more money.

For instance the fact that I haven't gotten my rent, I have a tenant who's been with me nine years. He's \$100 dollars under fair market rent. They're gonna

give me a one or two percent increase. If I say no, he's gonna have to go to another building, he's gonna -- and then the -- then he'll have to pay \$100 dollars more a month rent to get him into that building when they could try to work with me instead of giving me a one or two percent increase on my rent.

I have a lot of answers because I've seen it all. Please ask the questions.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Man, am I talking to Rafie or -- no, I'm joking. Thank you so much.

MARC GOTTESDIENER I've got a perspective because I've been in the system for over four decades. Living on Russ Street, almost getting killed as a landlord on Evergreen. And Broad and Russ Street, dealing with Hector Robus [phonetic] the crooked cop. Dealing with not people -- not happy. Things not going right. I've had it.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I appreciate your testimony and your feedback and your lived experiences here in the city. Any questions, comments? Representative Gonzalez.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Yeah, good afternoon. And you said your name was?

MARC GOTTESDIENER: My name is Marc Gottesdiener and I'm -- my office is at 177 Buckingham Street. I've been on 300 court committees for foreclosures for Superior Court and I lived on Russ Street from 1979 to 1987 when I got chased out of Hartford.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): And you said that you -- you rent for Section 8, they haven't paid the rent. That's what you said.

MARC GOTTESDIENER: I'm saying that there's an agency that has not sent me the rent on three or four -- at least three or four tenants and today's the 18th and I'm gonna call the Hartford Housing Authority when I have time. But I haven't had much time. I was hoping they would send me the checks. Right.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Okay then -- and when they are late [crosstalk].

MARC GOTTESDIENER: Yeah, I mean the -- the tenant pays like \$50 bucks or \$100 bucks and I've dealt with this for years and I'm getting tired of it. And that's why I don't have any more buildings with families. Because when there's a family with kids and they don't pay their rent, they get to stay all winter long and I get to get stuck with the rent.

I'm going to Heaven. I've given away tens of thousands of dollars and that's why I don't own buildings anymore with families. I just have one-bedrooms.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Okay.

MARC GOTTESDIENER: Because I don't want the aggravation.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Okay and when that person -- when that company or agency is late, does this reflect on the tenant?

MARC GOTTESDIENER: Of course. Well, how could it not when -- when you haven't gotten paid.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): But is the tenant -- the tenant has paid their part and they're supposed to go [crosstalk].

MARC GOTTESDIENER: Representative Gonzalez, I -- listen -- in a just world, I don't disagree with you. But when it comes time and they sent me a letter today. They're not even gonna raise my rent, okay, from an annual rent. And that tenant has been there eight years.

Okay and they're \$100 dollars under market and I have to pay taxes and insurance, you name it. And it's right down the street. It's across the street. Buckingham Street.

REP GONZALEZ (3RD): That's my [crosstalk].

MARC GOTTESDIENER: It's a half a mile away and I've owned the building for 33 years and the parking lot next to it for 40 years. So I've seen it all.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): And what number in Buckingham? That's my district.

MARC GOTTESDIENER: 177 Buckingham, corner of Wadsworth and the tenant lives on Wadsworth Street, third floor and lived there for ten years.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Okay, thank --

MARC GOTTESDIENER: You're certainly welcome -- you're certainly welcome afterwards -- I'll give you my card. You're certainly welcome to investigate because the housing -- I'm going to the Hartford Housing Authority next.

I've gone to HUD, Hartford and I've called Boston HUD and nobody wants to deal with it. Nobody wants to deal with these agencies. Everything is so regulated and regimented.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Yeah but when you sent the [Inaudible 03:56:39] they said that would pay the rent between the first and the tenth.

MARC GOTTESDIENER: The lady at HUD read to me, they're supposed to pay the rent the first week or the first of the month and today's the 18th. So you tell me how -- how -- who's oversighting. That's what we need an omnibudsman (sic) for. Somebody to watch over the people that have the money.

You know what it is? They get the money from HUD, they get the money from the city of Hartford, they're getting the interest from -- from the end of the month to whenever they cut the check. And that could be a lot of money because it -- there's millions of dollars every month.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Okay, thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you so much, Marc, thank you for your testimony.

MARC GOTTESDIENER: Thank you. Just remember, landlords have a voice too.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you so much. Carrie Rowley or Rowley? Rowley, got it. And I only say no clapping because sometimes you may not clap for everybody. So all right, no clapping.

CARRIE ROWLEY: I apologize, I was trying to outline and I submitted testimony as you all can see, on a number of bills but I really just wanna kinda address a couple of them to kind of keep it as short and sweet as possible.

And of course thank you all today, Senator Anwar, Representative McGee and ranking members -- Ranking

Member Senator Hwang and Representative Zullo who is no longer here. But that's okay. And other members of the Housing Committee and pardon me, I need to breathe for a second. [Deep breath] Ever do that? You just need to take a deep breath.

So I am representing the -- or I'm with the Connecticut Apartment Association. I do co-chair our Government Relations Committee. It is a volunteer position. I also work fulltime. I do quality control in the Multifamily Housing Industry.

The bills I specifically kind of want to look at today are S.B. 109, AN ACT CONCERNING A LANDLORD'S ABILITY TO CONSIDER THE CRIMINAL RECORD OF A PROSPECTIVE TENANT.

H.B. 5122, which is -- oh my goodness, let me read the name. AN ACT CONSIDERING CONSIDERATION OF CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS OF A PROSPECTIVE TENANT.

And also H.B. 5118, providing security systems and lighting. And I think I forgot one.

Nope. Nope, H.B. 5126, inspections and rental payments and the rental ombudsman.

Specifically to SB 109, my key points were it is -- we have potential liability for a landlord. Specifically for their representatives.

So like someone like me who's worked in property management for 11-plus years, I could be held individually liable within the language that's in that bill. So if I accidentally make a mistake, do something incorrectly, which we're all people who make mistakes, I could be held individually liable. That's in -- actually, technically that's in 5122.

Another point for this one, the issue or concerns, I should say, that we have is that even though it says there is immunity and civil liability, it doesn't protect our current residents from the impact of potentially negative acts when people are coming in. Things that you can't always anticipate.

As to H.B. 5122 again, a little bit more specifically, we do have processes and procedures in place for the application process. And because it's talking about screening tenants, we use screening companies -- almost done -- to reduce the potential impact of somebody not handling an application correctly within applicable laws.

And standards, and of course we would like to continue to be a continued resource in this conversation. And provide, you know, whatever we can to help to, you know, keep the conversation going forward on all of this.

I have two others but, you know, I'll skip them for now. It's not the end of the world.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Carrie. What are those two?

CARRIE ROWLEY: Hey, well thank you for asking.

H.B. 5126, it's the inspections, the rental payments and the rental housing ombudsman.

We're putting a statute in place for something which is already done although I'm not necessarily sure, honestly, if it's a requirement. But I would never move somebody into an apartment without having them walk through the apartment first, take pictures, write down any kind of conditional -- condition

items that they were concerned with. That's just good practice.

There was another issue with inspecting a unit prior to move out, doing pre-inspects. A lot of companies do that but it's with the caveat that we really can't fully see a unit until everybody has moved all of their stuff out. So if somebody has a giant tear and stain under their sofa, we don't know that until they've moved out and then all of a sudden you see the giant tear and stain that wasn't necessarily there before they moved in.

But it's, too, so people know what kind of funds that they're getting back with their security deposit. And I appreciate that and we want people to have an idea of what they need to take care of but at the same time, it's kind of hard to put it -- do it in practical terms.

And late fees, there is already a ten-day grace period and we really, as housing providers, we want people to live in our homes, in our houses. You know, we don't wanna find reasons for people to be evicted. However, it does cost us funds as well to collect -- to collect money to do the activities to make sure that we are getting all of our rents in to operate our housing so we have to be able to recoup that in a variety of ways. And that is one of them.

And that was actually H.B.5126 and did I forget -- H.B. 5118, providing security and lighting. We as quality housing providers strive to maintain our communities and properties. Not every community or building is built the same and it is difficult to place one standard for all and again, I want to point out that I do do quality control for maintenance and for buildings.

So there are a lot of companies out there who are really very specifically looking at those things to make sure that, you know, we're taking good care and that we're good maintainers of the housing that we have and that we provide.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you.

CARRIE ROWLEY: You're welcome.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. You know, you and I, I think, along with your legal representation, we had a pretty colorful conversation. I thought it was productive. Would you agree?

CARRIE ROWLEY: Yes.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): You know, one of the things that we talked about was providing opportunities for tenants who are in situations where there are some bad actors.

In that, we wish to encourage policies like the ones we're talking about today but oftentimes we put in these policies and new regulations and some of our good actors are scratching their heads like -- why are we going through this again.

Then we're stuck with trying to figure out how and what can be done to protect some of the most vulnerable in the state. Who, unfortunately, may not be a part of your tenant association where you all are providing a great product, if you would? Your housing stock is good, you've got great property managers and everybody's doing what they need to do to provide quality housing for residents.

CARRIE ROWLEY: So we would hope.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): We hope, right? And so I'm just -- I'm really thankful for your testimony and being able to kind of provide a bit more of perspective, excuse me, on the topic.

But I'd love to have a further discussion on this and --

CARRIE ROWLEY: Absolutely.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): -- and be able to engage your association among -- I think there are several other folks who are here that represent landlord associations as well and we'd love to have these conversations with you.

Any questions, comments? Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, I just wanna thank you for coming out and speaking and giving up of your time. I appreciate it, thank you.

CARRIE ROWLEY: Thank you very much.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Enjoy the rest of your day. All right, Erin Boggs.

ERIN BOGGS: Good afternoon, my name is Erin Boggs, and I am the Executive Director of the Open Communities Alliance, a non-profit organization that promotes equitable access to housing across Connecticut and addresses the fact that Connecticut is one of the most segregated states in the country.

Thank you to the leadership of the Committee for the opportunity to testify today. I am here to support four bills designed to give housing voucher holders a greater choice in where they live and address that Connecticut is so segregated.

I'll not have time to get to the details of each bill so I will refer you to my written testimony and of course I'm happy to respond to questions.

I think the best way to convey the need for these four bills is really the story of one of my clients, Mrs. Carter, a low-income African-American single mother who tried for 11 years to move with her family, with her children, to Simsbury from Hartford.

Ms. Carter's full story, her full housing odyssey, was chronicled in ProPublica in the Connecticut Mirror in January. The family's saga started when Mrs. Carter left her abusive husband and found refuge for herself and her children at a homeless shelter.

Her journey involved being illegally and discriminatorily refused admittance to a voucher program by a town in Litchfield County facing discrimination by individual landlords, contending with unnecessary bureaucratic barriers when trying to move with her family from one town to another, finding few affordable units in Simsbury and elsewhere and facing challenges even in determining the value of her voucher outside of Hartford.

Along the way, Ms. Carter, who is ever resourceful, managed to get two of her children in school in Simsbury through the Open Choice program where they are currently thriving.

The family knew they liked the community, they wanted to live there and eventually the Carters were able to do so despite steep barriers. But they were only able to accomplish this because of their own astounding tenacity and the extraordinary assistance

of organizations and individuals who aren't available to do this for every family.

The four bills proposed would help families like the Carters. Senate Bill 108, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OPEN CHOICE VOUCHERS PILOT PROGRAM. This would create a pilot program for income-qualifying families participating in the Open Choice inter-district school program, allowing them to move to the community where their kids are in school if they so choose, using a rental assistance program certificate. The Carters would have benefitted from this program.

S.B. 110, AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING AUTHORITY JURISDICTION. In Connecticut, Housing Authority jurisdiction is typically defined by very narrow town borders. This, along with incentives and Federal programs unnecessarily restricts choices for families and means that you have to go through a whole lot of bureaucratic hoops to move with a voucher or in the case of development, housing authorities are not able to do that in other towns.

This proposal would expand the jurisdiction of housing authorities by 15 miles from their municipal borders. It would not have any effect whatsoever on the zoning powers of the receiving town but it would allow our housing authorities to become a real partner in promoting integration.

I'll just list the last two bills and I welcome question on these. H.B. 5125, AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPARENCY OF RENTAL RATES FOR TENANTS RECEIVING RENTAL ASSISTANCE.

And H.B. 5127, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE'S LONG-TERM AND SHORT-TERM PLANNING CONCERNING HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you so much, Erin, for your testimony and also the work that your organization has done for the last decade at least that I'm familiar with. And really elevating this idea of creating opportunities for families to move wherever they so choose to live in the state of Connecticut.

But also providing data to help us and form policy and form our conversations as we continue to address the lack of housing and access in the state of Connecticut.

Could you -- could you elaborate a little bit more on House Bill 5125 and just the importance of the transparency on rental rates for tenants?

ERIN BOGGS: Sure, this is a really simple concept. So every year HUD publishes something called a fair market rent. And they do it by bedroom size and it's basically the value of a Housing Choice voucher. This voucher that tenants can take if they -- income qualify and they win the lottery, they can take on the open rental market to rent a unit.

Housing authorities then have discretion to go ten percent -- up to ten percent above that or ten percent below that and these are set, in some cases, in the Hartford region, by zip code. In other places, it's by town.

So there's a lot of leeway here. These payments, these values, are not necessarily published on housing authority websites. Sometimes they are,

sometimes they're not. And they're not published centrally anywhere else.

So this is a very simple proposal that once a housing authority decides what their rate is, within 30 days they need to post it on their website and share it with two-on-one so it can be centrally posted.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. And you know, the reason I asked that is because most folks aren't aware that these rates should be public knowledge. Especially for the tenant who's saying, "Look, I'm gonna take my voucher and I'm gonna move somewhere."

It is good to know how much or the value of that voucher is before, you know, getting your hopes up to move to a certain town in the neighborhood only to be told that, "Oh sorry, you don't have enough." Or you don't have enough money to pay into that voucher.

So I appreciate your work and your feedback and look forward to having further conversation. Senator Anwar.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Erin, again for your testimony. I wanted to ask you about 5127 and I know that you were probably listening when the Commissioner of Housing was against this and it was because of the amount of work it would require and the lack of enough changes in the -- the testament of the date in about one year time.

I was trying to get to the fact that since she was and then the Department is completely on board with

and I think the essence is well-recognized in this and I know in your testimony as well.

But the logistical challenge was the issue on 5127. What are your thoughts about that?

ERIN BOGGS: I actually wasn't here when she testified.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Oh, sorry.

ERIN BOGGS: But I can -- I can guess -- I mean I can take from what you said and what the Department's position has in the past to sort of guess what their thoughts are now.

The state invests tremendous amounts of money in housing and it's really important that we do it. But we need to do it in a way that is planned and we need to do it in a way that does not foster segregation.

The Malloy administration, for all its wonderful investments in housing had a worse track record than all the previous administrations in -- accumulatively -- in investing only in affordable housing in cities that are already -- already have high levels of poverty.

That's not a policy we can continue and that happens partly because it's the path of least resistance. You don't have exclusionary zoning in cities. You have lots of families who really need a place to live.

And unless we start creating goals and having some level of accountability that's attached to our investments, you know, if you want to get to somewhere, if you want to get to a point where there

are more housing choices and we are not one of the most segregated states in the country, you have to set goals and you have to measure whether you're achieving those goals.

So that's what this proposal is. It's not that complicated to implement and the way it differs from what is actually required by HUD, which is a report that is submitted every ten years and updated every five years, is -- that doesn't have -- that doesn't require very specific numerical goals and it doesn't require that those goals be matched up against these opportunity designations.

So this is -- this is a much more of an accountable system, it's something that we can really look at and pay attention to and measure year over year.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): That's helpful to me because between the Commissioner's perspective as I heard and then also I think Michael Santoro who was here. The thought was that we are already doing this and reporting to the Federal government every five years and if you were to do this every one year it's gonna be resource intensive without making much of a difference.

But I think, if I understand you correct, you're saying that the HUD reports are generic and not necessarily vision-oriented and task-oriented with respect to the specific challenge we are facing in the state of Connecticut about segregation and building affordable housing on top of the existing affordable housing and keeping communities in specific areas rather than allowing them to expand and have upward mobility.

So those opportunities have not necessarily been well-recognized in our state and you're hoping a report like that which would be focused on our values rather than the actual numbers? But the values followed by the numbers and then moving in that direction is what you're seeking.

ERIN BOGGS: Yeah, the HUD reports are -- the goals there are generally very broad or they're set at such a low level that you hit the -- you know, they're easy to hit. Here -- because there's not a requirement to do more.

Here, what we're talking about is something where we're setting numerical goals with the express purpose of what's called Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing, which is a part of the Fair Housing Act. So that's intentionally reversing the history of segregation.

So you know where you're -- what the broad goal is and you're setting numerical goals to reach them. So it's much more specific and it's something that we can measure year after year. Because the department has to report these numbers anyway, right, after five years, something -- something around -- you know, something approximately.

We have to do a report every five years. They should be collecting this data anyway so it really shouldn't be a lot more work. It should just be something they're doing every year that then goes into the five-year report. It makes it easier for them and it actually makes it more concrete because then they have these specific goals they've already laid out.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): So if we were to adjust this bill to include the value-based calculations rather than the hard generic calculations but do it every five years so that we don't get a fiscal note associated with this.

ERIN BOGGS: I think we're still not doing it often enough if we do it every five years because that gets you, you know, if you're gonna hold a certain Governor accountable for what's going on, five years, they're gone.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Right.

ERIN BOGGS: Potentially. And we need to be look at this year over year because by the time five years goes by, they'll say -- oh, that was so long ago, that was an old policy.

We need to look every year and see what's going on and see how policy's affecting reality.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): I see what you're saying but I also recognize that if we were to move in that direction, there's gonna be a fiscal note and then I want a bill like this from a value perspective to pass but as soon as there's a fiscal note, I know that it will pass through this committee but it may not go beyond that.

ERIN BOGGS: I mean the other way to approach this is for the Department of Housing is entitled to a percentage of administrative fees on the bonding that they get to do housing.

And a percentage of their -- that bonding money could be dedicated to reporting and, you know, creating these goals and creating the reporting that really should go along with responsibly

administering that money in the first place. So that's just another avenue to get there.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): I think this would require a little bit more conversation and putting everybody on the same page but your testimony and your conversation right now really helped me because after listening to the Commissioner's perspective, I said -- okay, this bill probably will not go further but I -- I don't know the reports of HUD and what they are talking about affordability and desegregation component.

So if that is not addressing that, we as a state are obviously looking at the current day numbers in 2020, we are doing miserable. Miserably at this time and we have to figure out a strategy around it and if you want to get that -- if you don't measure it, you don't have a strategy, you don't know where you're going, then you're not going anywhere.

ERIN BOGGS: And the HUD report very -- it's inconstant. The HUD requires, you know, X and then how you carry out X depends on how the report is written.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Yeah.

ERIN BOGGS: So, you know for example, the last version of this report, I did the first draft of. And it had these -- it had numbers in it. It had not goals but it had numbers in terms of outcomes.

And so that's a good start. Now we need the goals. We need the -- who knows what the next version of the report will say. Who knows what the report after that will say? It could go any of a number of different ways.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): So and this is a broad question that is for us as well is that at the times our agencies are answering to the Federal requirements. And what you're saying is let's step back and see, define ourselves who we are and where we are going and then rather than just fulfilling the questions on the HUD side which allows us to get the funding which is fine but -- but define the values ourselves and in such a manner that we can address the issues that have fallen by the wayside in the last many years.

ERIN BOGGS: And I think that's particularly important when at the Federal level we're seeing a wholesale rollback of all kinds of civil rights requirements. We need to say what we are going to do in Connecticut about our problem here.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): I hear you loud and clear. Thank you, this was very helpful to me and thank you for your time and thank you for your advocacy.

ERIN BOGGS: Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Senator Anwar. Thank you, Erin, for your testimony and your feedback. Thanks a lot.

Tony Johnson.

TONY JOHNSON: Yes. Good afternoon. Thank you for having me today. I'm from CONN-NAHRO. Our President, Joe D'Esko [phonetic] had to leave earlier today because he had another appointment. And he was just gonna comment on S.B. 5122 and he provided a written information on his comments there.

I am here to talk about Senate Bill 105. My name is Anthony Johnson. As I just expressed, I've worked in commercial, residential, public and affordable housing for the past 30 years as a manager, developer and owner of property.

My experience includes working at the Chicago Housing Authority where my portfolio included nine public housing developments that underwent Hope VI conversion. I worked at a firm that created 500 units of affordable housing utilizing tax credit programs. I am currently the Executive Director of the Greenwich Housing Authority which provides approximately 1200 units of housing through the State of Connecticut Moderate Income Program, Public Housing, Section 8, Multifamily, scattered sites and I also operate an assisted living facility. I am also the Chair of the CONN-NAHRO Housing and Legislation Committee.

CONN-NAHRO understands and supports the need to provide and protect the right to housing with the stated goal of preventing residents from entering into a situation of homelessness by providing assistance and supportive services in concept, but we cannot support S.B. 105 as written for the following reasons.

There is no way to determine the contours of this right, which is left to the regulatory process which we don't know what that would be.

There appears to be no funding that would be attached to this bill. The bill provides no measurement to evaluate the impact of the bill on

housing authorities and on stated outcomes as defined in the bill.

S.B. 105 would increase the demand for housing authorities' resources that are already overburdened. The stated goal 105 currently covered -- is covered under existing laws. And the Federal government does not currently recognize a right to housing.

And for these reasons, we are willing to support it and work with you to structure a bill that we can support. That ends my comments, thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you so much, Mr. Johnson. Any questions, comments from the committee? Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate you spending the time, coming up and offering your experience and your work in Chicago, right?

TONY JOHNSON: Yes.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): To be able to kind of offer some structure to what is a -- a noble idea. And an important idea, would you agree with that statement?

TONY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And could you kind of reiterate some of the needed structure as well as process that needs to be shared to really make it a reality?

The concept is noble but the execution is really the hulk and you having done so many of the existing projects and understood the challenge of it, what I'm hearing in your testimony is there's still an

awful lot of heavy lifting that's necessary. The idea's noble but nevertheless, you don't have all the pieces in place in this. Would that be correct to day?

TONY JOHNSON: Absolutely. I think what we read right now and the written legislation as it stands today is that it's too broad. I think a gentleman spoke about this earlier.

There will be no way to get your arms around this in any form or fashion that would make it enforceable, understandable, and would not allow you to establish any goals.

I think another big part of it is that it was focused on -- on the homeless and the homeless population then broadly focused on housing rights for all individuals.

So I think if we can define it, we can quantify it, we can establish goals and procedures that we can all agree on. We can find funding mechanisms to be able to fund the programs that we would establish and the rights that we would establish and what those rights are and what does it mean in relationship to already existing rights.

I think we can come up with something that we would agree to and CONN-NAHRO would be very supportive of working with you to establish that.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Could you kinda share for the testimony CONN-NAHRO. What its goal is, what the body is --

TONY JOHNSON: Yes.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): -- and because not everybody knows what y'all do.

TONY JOHNSON: Yeah, Connecticut NAHRO is made up of most of the housing authorities of the state of Connecticut. It's part of the National Housing Authority Organization but CONN-NAHRO is the state organization.

It includes some of our vendors that provide services to us but it's mainly made up of executive directors of the many housing authorities throughout the state of Connecticut.

Our goal is to foster and continue to maintain and improve housing in the state of Connecticut. Moderate, low-income and affordable housing. And in some cases now, as housing authorities are going into mixed income properties including commercial properties.

I operate some commercial properties as well in Greenwich. So this spanned of what housing authorities used to do and where they're going to be able to survive in the future, to provide funding and also to take care of their residents, they have to expand and understand the business that they're in. They're no longer -- I hate to throw this out but I will -- because I think one of the things that, since I've joined CONN-NAHRO, I want to define ourselves as an organization that deals with real estate versus organizations that deals in the social service realm.

We can hire social service professionals but when you try to do it all, you do something badly somewhere along the line.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): I'd be curious to kind of read your resume and just kind of reading through your testimony, you've pretty much devoted your adult career to affordable and workforce housing.

TONY JOHNSON: Yeah, actually -- [crosstalk].

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Throughout the community, right? And I think that's an important part is -- is you're not just an individual that's saying no from an obstruction perspective, you are bringing a wealth of experience with a -- a mission and a goal of increasing access to all.

And that's what I see in the work that you've done.

TONY JOHNSON: Well, you're absolutely right. My background is I'm an accountant by trade. I worked for a public accounting firm for years. I worked for United Airlines for nine years prior to that.

And then as I was at the airline, I actually started buying real estate on my own. So I ended up owning about 90 units of apartment buildings myself which is where I learned this business at. I think there was a gentleman talking about the difficulty of being a landlord early on. It is very difficult. And it's not as simple and easy as some people believe it is.

And so yes, we're not saying no. We actually want to provide housing. Our mission is to provide as much and the best housing that we can provide in the state of Connecticut.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And you would be receptive to working with all of our very valued and impassionate advocates to try to reach a compromise to

facilitate. Isn't the ultimate goal to increase housing stock for everyone?

And but there are unique challenges, right? I mean you worked in Chicago and now you're in Greenwich.

TONY JOHNSON: Right.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Now they're two different animals but ultimately can you share from both wells of experience how you could just be able to bring both "extremes", sort of speak, quote/unquote? After this experience?

TONY JOHNSON: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. I think that, you know, as I said, I have 1200 units of low-income housing and moderate-income housing in Greenwich.

I don't have a lot of crime. I have a high percentage of the population works for a living. We pretty much break even or do better than break even on all of our properties but we also measure all the metrics of running a business like a housing authority or any other business, just like you would anywhere else.

I think in Chicago, what I've seen over the years -- when I was there. Things have changed now because a lot of the really big buildings have been torn down and gentrified. Which is something I wouldn't have done the way they did it. They lost a lot of public housing and affordable housing in an attempt to gentrify communities. And I'm against that. I would've been against that because I would try to maintain as much more affordable housing as I could.

For me in Greenwich, I think my experience in Chicago of having worked there, having owned

property and understanding communities and not just the community of the people and the population that I'm serving but to be able to do new developments like I'm doing in Greenwich today has taken time.

But I had to understand and build a trust in the community in a place like Greenwich that was opposed to new construction or even existing construction for the first six, seven years that I was there.

So it was a fight to actually get that trust and since that has occurred, we have properties that currently can be redeveloped, meaning that we have open land.

And in Greenwich, we have to obtain a municipal improvement certificate. That means you have to the Board of Selectmen and say, "Hey, this is my idea, I wanna develop on these pieces of land that I have the ability to do that on."

And I have three large pieces of land that the Board of Selectmen actually have approved for development. Which would've never happened previously.

So now it's just a matter of money and timing to be able to redevelop those properties.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): I'm encouraged to hear that and we've heard in this -- and believe me, there is a history of possible exclusion and segregation that may exist in this but I am encouraged that you have just brought out in Greenwich that the Board of Selectmen has approved three building initiatives in support of affordable housing.

And I do believe that the challenges you may have experienced early on, there's less of that now or perhaps all communities have seen the light. And

have taken the initiative to try to create a collaborative solution to addressing workforce and affordable housing.

Your example doesn't get enough ears or doesn't get enough noise of -- this is Greenwich and you've just had the Board of Selectmen approve three building projects. That in itself is quite a compliment. It's a compliment to you, perhaps maybe it's former Representative Fred Camillo's input as well.

TONY JOHNSON: Absolutely. Fred has been a big supporter from the day I arrived, so.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And I think this is an opportunity where through the work of housing and advocates like the Chairs and I appreciate their indulgence on this. We're forging a new path forward where all of our towns are given an opportunity to have local input in creating solutions that are viable and sustainable into the future.

So I appreciate that and I really am encouraged by what you've shared. And I hope that we do more of it and I've always emphasized that perhaps we could do more with public/private as well as local, state and federal input to creating more solutions.

Because I think one of the challenges we have in lower Fairfield County is land price.

TONY JOHNSON: Yeah.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Yet land price is an incredible dynamic that perhaps the rest of the state doesn't encounter. And we've gotta count that but we can make solutions. We can create solutions with partnerships and everybody getting involved.

So I want to thank the Chair's indulgence and ultimately we're on this committee -- Democrats and Republicans working together to try to increase housing stock for everyone in the state of Connecticut.

TONY JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Johnson.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Senator and thank you, Mr. Johnson. Any other questions? Comments? Thank you.

TONY JOHNSON: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Next up we have Rich Porgh. Did I say -- I'm just messing up everybody's name. [Background conversation] Rick, yeah. United -- United Way, I know that. Now Senator tells me after I said it and I asked him. [Laughter]

RICK PORGH: It's fine. I really appreciate the chance to testify today and I'm gonna focus specifically on two bills on your agenda that mention 211.

Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, members of the Committee, I thank you for this opportunity. I want to talk about H.B. 5129, AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRANSITION PROGRAM FOR INCARCERATED PERSONS BEING RELEASED FROM PRISON.

And I also want to mention briefly at the end of H.B. 5125, transparency of rental rates for tenants receiving rental assistance.

Through our 211 service and I know you have been very active in advocating on behalf of the homeless

individuals and making sure that the coordinated access system works as good as it can. That's how we come to this and we've been privileged to work with many great partners in state government -- Department of Housing, Mental Health and Addiction Services, many others and many, many good nonprofits across the state on coordinated access.

And while we've made great progress over the last number of years, all of us involved in this know that we need to do more to help people who are leaving incarceration and we need to do more for people who are unsheltered.

And again, you as Chairman in particular, have spent a lot of time on those issues and we appreciate that.

We want to say thank you to the Governor, the Administration, and to the Legislature for staying with all of us in the coordinated access work to make it as good as it can be and we welcome your efforts to improve on transitions for people who are re-entering their communities.

So based on our work in 211, we really do agree that work should begin as early as possible before released from incarceration so that the necessary steps can be taken to help people avoid homelessness.

Devils in the details -- we would -- we agree with some of the previous people providing testimony that we -- we need more housing and upstream resources and options to help make that a reality. And we -- we are eager to want [Inaudible 04:37:41] is to play a role in any solutions that would smooth transitions for people re-entering their communities

but we also know that some of the best solutions don't need to start with 211.

And so we support all their efforts such as the ones going on in New Haven called the Returning Home Pilot where CSSD and the Department of Housing are working on a Rapid Rehousing pilot. Doing great innovative creative work well before people are released from incarceration to make sure that they don't become homeless.

So we stand ready along with our partners at the Coalition to End Homelessness, the Partnership for Strong Communities -- thousands of shelter providers. You, who work so hard on this to try to find the best ways, the best resources and strategies to help do better for people leaving incarceration.

It's a costly problem and we want to support the effort whatever way we can.

One quick minute on the 5125. We absolutely agree with the -- the bill that would increase transparency on rental rates. Tens of thousands of people come to our Section 8 website, our rental housing voucher website.

We even have a feature where people can ask us to notify them when there's a new posting in any of the housing authorities or any of the agencies that issue housing vouchers so they can be notified of what's available. And we know how important it is to provide accurate information to people.

Thanks for the chance to speak today.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. And thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Comments? Senator Anwar.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much, Rick, and thank you for your patience today and thank you for the work that each and every person does at United Way and the people who answer -- I think some 80,000 phone calls for people last year alone.

RICK PORGH: Right.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): That were home and shelter insecure. And I think you're -- you're the first line responders for a number of things including suicide prevention and then some other work.

If you were to -- the challenge that I'm gonna ask questions around your work and your organization a little bit. To take this opportunity right now, resources remain a challenge and the work that you're doing and the time for waiting is a little on the higher side at times for people, if there were enough resources that can be fixed.

RICK PORGH: We do believe so and we -- but we -- so the waiting times sometimes are longer than any of us would want when people do call 211. I think that's what you're alluding to.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Yes.

RICK PORGH: CCEH has a dashboard for coordinated access which is posted online and provides the most up-to-date information on waiting times and many other data points connected to coordinated access.

Last month the average waiting time was 6.4 minutes. However, the longest waits are still pretty long.

And we continue to work, especially lately for people who are unsheltered, on new strategies like a texting platform to allow people who are unsheltered and out on the street to just text in and not use up their phone minutes.

We're also working with DHMAS on possibly having a simple, simple survey for Outreach workers to use when they're working with unsheltered people to find out quickly what it is they need and what kinds of alternatives can work best for them.

So in answer to your question, Senator Anwar, we do believe that ultimately, like many speakers have said already, the solution is more affordable housing, more rapid rehousing. More subsidized supported housing so that there are more different options.

It's very frustrating for our front line 211 workers who might take a call at midnight or 2:00 a.m. in the morning and we don't have concrete options to refer them to in order to avoid homelessness.

We find ways to do that but the more we can help all of our partners have -- make available more different options, more different resources -- the better our whole system will work.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): And I think the reason you created a new opportunity to text and then that saves time as well as we had tested it before this cold weather we had and we had to find -- make sure everybody had warm place and town-based.

So that works very well. When we texted it, immediately your response was very good and then they kept checking on me that day and I told them I

was a State Senator, I'm just checking it to see if it works.

And then they were still checking, making sure and I said I was fine. [Crosstalk] Which is a good system, I think that saves a lot of effort and time for people.

We are also exploring something that since you're here I wanted to ask you this question.

We're -- we're hoping that some of the people who have the Federal support of Lifeline phones. If those minutes, because there are a limited amount of minutes, if they were to call 211, those minutes would not be charged. And they won't lose the minutes because those minutes are very precious for those individuals at that time.

RICK PORGH: I think that would make a real difference for us, Senator Anwar. We tried at United Way a couple years ago to call a couple of the providers for that service. Some people call them Obama phones -- to ask if they would make 211 calls free of charge to the caller. And they -- they said it would create a precedent that they couldn't do.

However, it was just us asking if the state of Connecticut asked in a formal way to do that, that might very well be possible and it would help a lot. It would make a difference.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Is there a way within your system to be able to identify how many phone calls are made through that?

RICK PORGH: I don't know the answer to that but I can find out.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay, that would help us out. And then your support of the transparent part of the bill, I appreciate that because I think it's a good opportunity to make sure everybody knows what's happening with respect to that.

RICK PORGH: We do too and we know -- we can tell you for a fact that tens of thousands of Connecticut residents want that kind of information.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Yes. Thank you again for your time and testimony.

RICK PORGH: Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thanks again, Rick. Before you go, just on the free phone calls, we all agree with that and I think where we got a little hung up was this idea of providing free calls for homeless individuals and the question that came up is -- well, how do you know one was homeless when they call the system.

And so then the conversation was broadened to anyone who has this phone and have minutes, how could their minutes be free when they make phone calls to 211. We know you have one program that allows that to happen.

Do you think there's a possibility, just to re-ask that question, do you think there's a possibility to use -- we'll call Obama phones -- as a starting point? And where does that cost -- what incurs that cost? The carrier, the state

RICK PORGH: I think that when people call DSS, for example, now those calls are free. And I think that

the license that providers get in order to operate in the state and provide that service requires them to deliver those kinds of calls free of charge.

That's my understanding. Again, we tried a couple of years ago to have the same thing for 211 callers and you're exactly right, Representative McGee, it needs to be anyone who's got one of those phones, not just a specific part of the population in order for it to work the way it could work.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I appreciate that. And if you can get us some more information, that would be absolutely amazing and it would help us as we continue to work on this bill.

RICK PORGH: We'll look into it and see if we can provide that information.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you.

RICK PORGH: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thanks a lot.

RICK PORGH: Thanks everyone.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Next up we have Amy Epstein. And as she's coming to the mic, I remember working with her about a year-and-a-half ago with her students to help guide all of these great minds on this side on drafting policy.

And I've gotta tell you, the students that she -- she sent our way were absolutely phenomenal.

[Crosstalk] Were they a part of the Yale?

AMY EPSTEIN: We did indeed and I was actually gonna ask your indulgence to allow Brendan Bernicker and Rob Larose who are a new crop of students --

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Okay. [Crosstalk]

AMY EPSTEIN: -- and they're the next people on list -- the list and the one after that so if you let them join me they will testify about H.B. 5122 and then afterwards I'll jump in for a little minute about [crosstalk].

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Are these law students?

AMY EPSTEIN: Yes.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): You all make it brief, okay? Brevity is powerful. However. However, I think what you all are doing is absolutely amazing and being a part of this process first hand is on-the-job training. So the floor is yours.

ROB LAROSE: Representative McGee, Senator Anwar and esteemed members of the Committee, my name is Rob Larose and I'm here with my colleagues from the re-entry clinic at New Haven Legal Assistance and we are here first to offer support for House Bill 5122 but also to encourage the committee to adopt the proposed modifications and amendments that we laid out in our written submitted testimony as well in our bill markup.

So as to align the bill better with the recommendations that came out of the months of discussion in the Council for Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record.

I know you guys have heard a lot of testimony today on this matter already and I wanna be respectful of your time. But I do want to call attention first to earlier testimony stating that it is tough to be a landlord.

I would hope that everyone in this room can agree that it may be tough to be a landlord but it is even tougher -- it is very tough -- to be someone who was formerly incarcerated or to be someone who is dealing with a past criminal conviction.

In our work at the re-entry clinic at New Haven Legal Assistance, we work with clients every day who express their continual struggles to secure safe and stable housing due to a past criminal conviction.

Housing landlords can reject an application for a past criminal conviction even if the conviction is from long ago or has little to no relevance to one's ability to be a safe and respectful tenant.

Well, I don't think is just about bad actors. I know we've talked about that a little bit before. I think this is also an issue with the good faith actors, those who are trying to make the best possible decision for their property, for their business and they're doing so with all the information available to them.

We think, however, that at a certain point, certain information should no longer be available, it should no longer be part of the consideration in a housing application because of the negative adverse consequences that it will have on already vulnerable populations leading to housing instability, homelessness and even recidivism.

This is why we are here to offer support for House Bill 5122. We believe that individuals should be seen and viewed for the entirety of who they are, not just one poor choice or one regrettable mistake in their past, maybe decades ago.

And so that is why this is an issue that matters so much to us but matters even more so to the individuals we work with every day who don't have the luxury to be able to come here and speak on their behalf.

So with that I will turn it over to Brenden. Thank you.

BRENDAN BERNICKER: Thank you. So Representative McGee, you expressed earlier that you feel like you've been having this same conversation for two years. And that's a totally understandable sentiment.

And so our goal, in order to be respectful of your time is that over the last two years we've had these processes you mentioned -- the CEO process, we talked a lot about the recommendations from the Council on the Collateral Consequences of Conviction and their housing subcommittee.

And out of that process, we have a set of recommendations on which you heard earlier from Richard Cho, we have near consensus. You've heard from a couple different people today talking about those recommendations.

We've taken the liberty over the holiday weekend of incorporating them into a markup bill which we've shared as part of our written testimony.

I'd be happy in response to questions to go through each of the differences between the existing bill and the bill that we've submitted. The most important ones and the ones I'd like to draw your attention to.

The first is that the markup bill we've submitted incorporates Ban the Box provision to prevent landlords or other housing providers from asking on an initial housing application whether or not somebody has been involved in the criminal justice system.

The arguments for this have been laid out before in the case of employment and we think that it's especially relevant in housing because under the existing bill, landlords would not be allowed to have or advertise a preference for people without convictions.

And when you include that question on the application, you are, you know, at least suggesting to many people that there is, you know, a barrier that exists for people with convictions that wouldn't exist otherwise.

And we think that even in light of the existing language before our amendments that that would be sort of an inappropriate deterrent.

Now the second major change is that our bill would protect people who had criminal convictions for conduct that occurred while they were juveniles. Similarly with the other -- with the rest of the bill, we believe that there are certain convictions that landlords should be allowed to consider. You know, we heard earlier from some landlords about why it's important that they can consider that and how it might be predictive of future behavior.

You know, you can't look into someone's heart but we think that there has to be a point where we draw a line on what from the past should be allowed to continue to affect people in the future. And we

think that consistent with the broader protections for juvenile records and the broader confidentiality provisions that it makes sense to extend that protection to people whose convictions arose out of conduct before they turned 18.

The final major change, and again, I'm happy to go through the smaller changes with lots of questions but the final major change is to calculate the lookback period.

So in the existing bill it is three years for misdemeanors or ten years for felonies. Because of these are a deliberative inclusive process that we had, we agreed to compromise with our -- with Representative [Inaudible 04:52:43] and the various housing providers on a ten-year lookback period for both housing -- for both misdemeanors and felonies but that that lookback period, again, wouldn't extend to juveniles and that also would be calculated from the date of conviction rather than under the existing bill where it's the date of conviction or the date of release, whichever is later.

And again, we think this is a fair compromise both because the date of conviction is easier to administer, it shows up in court records, it shows up on background checks whereas release date doesn't always or creates this inconsistency. But in addition, too, it would be easier to administer.

We also think that there is a strong argument that one of the major benefits of the protections in these bills is that it will help to reduce recidivism and to ensure access and that those protections would not be well-served if the first ten years after someone is released from prison,

they can't -- well, while they're most at risk to recidivate, they can't benefit from the protections that we offer.

So again, we'd be happy to respond to answer questions if there are smaller things in the bill but those are the major exception to changes.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you so much for your work. Also the mark -- your feedback on the existing bill and all the recommendations from the Committee on Collateral Consequences as well as the Hope for Success report that I'm sure you all have read over as well.

I want to take some time to look that over. Again, I think a lot of what you all provided are all great recommendations that could be included into one bill. I just think that these types of bills, it's nice to have one in every committee, if you ask me. And I'd love to see where the Judiciary Committee will land in addition to the Governor's efforts.

I mean we've seen his recommendation. Many providers are -- excuse me -- advocates don't believe that he's gone far enough. And so we have to meet somewhere in the middle but the work you all are doing is absolutely phenomenal and I'll be in touch with both of you.

Thank you for your testimony. Amy?

ROB LAROSE: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): And I was just gonna let her -- you guys stay. I was just gonna let her testify and then Senator Hwang and whoever else would like to comment.

AMY EPSTEIN: Thank you so much for your -- all the work that I know you have engaged in for years and all this committee. We're so glad that this is back on your agenda and -- and as my colleagues here said, you know, what we gave you in the markup, it's not necessarily what we think would be ideal. What we think would be ideal is if a bill could get passed this year and I think that very intensive deliberative process that Richard Cho described to you did come up with something that everybody around that table -- there was some buy-in. You know, whether that will end up being true, I don't know but so our hope was to try to make the work of your committee a little easier by having that sort of draft and comparing it to what you have -- what you put forward this time. So that's what we sent you.

I did want to just tell you one other thing that I sent you only later today. There was a -- so when we worked with the Collateral Consequences Housing Committee, there was a -- we had a starting point with a program developer, the New York -- in New York State for their state subsidized housing. And they developed a template, it's almost like a flowchart that landlords would use to go through. And in evaluating somebody who had criminal convictions as a possible tenant.

We took that and revised that to be consistent with the Connecticut -- the version that the subcommittee of the Collateral -- the Council came up with. And I refiled our testimony this morning which had that attached so you would have it. I also have paper copies if you want it.

I think it's actually -- because one of the things that the committee proposed was that there'd be a

template that DOH and CHRO would make available to landlords. Not to mandate them to use but to help them in doing this evaluation. So I'd be happy to give you the paper copies if you'd like as well.

Okay, if you have questions on that and you want to address that first, that's great. If you want to hear from me very briefly on 5121, I'm happy to do that as well.

So okay, so one of the other hats I wear is I'm a Housing Attorney at New Haven Legal Assistance and I actually spent a long time representing some tenants who were operating licensed home daycares out of their rental apartments and their landlord was seeking to evict them because of having this licensed home daycare.

And it's because of that that I -- it's actually in 5121, it's the section four of that bill, lines 278 through 281 that addresses that problem and prohibits landlords from including any provisions in their lease that prevent tenants from operating licensed home daycares. And I think that's an important thing that I hope this committee will also be able to pass.

It seemed to me the licensed home daycare was a win/win/win situation. That it was good for the tenant who was able to provide -- get income from operating a daycare in her home. It was great for her neighbors who she actually, you know, took in kids and kept them till late at night because the dad worked the -- or one of the parents worked a night shift.

She took somebody in early in the morning to accommodate their schedules. My client was Spanish

speaking and so were her neighbors and she provided culturally-sensitive daycare. It was really a wonderful situation that I thought was a benefit for everybody and I'm hoping that -- that we support at Legal Services, we support that provision of the 5121 that would help enable tenants to do this and not -- prohibit landlords from stopping them from doing something.

The last thing I'd say about that is that I think the great part about the licensed home daycares is it does provide all sorts of restrictions and requirements that limits the numbers of kids, it does a health and safety check, it you know, checks for lead, all these kinds of things.

When you don't do that what happens is the daycare goes underground and then it's called babysitting and it doesn't have any of those safety regulatory protections.

So I think making it not underground and licensed is the way to go.

Thank you for your consideration and we're happy to answer any questions on any of the above.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you and if you could leave a copy -- a paper copy in addition to the email.

AMY EPSTEIN: I will leave you -- I brought 20 so.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Oh sweet. Thank you so much and I think the Committee would appreciate that as well.

Again, I will be in touch with you to get some more questions answered. I know last year our bill was referred to the Judiciary Committee so we wanna

clean this bill up as much as possible before it's referred over to that particular committee.

We also know that the Judicial Committee is working on the clean slate language and a lot of this may fold into that overall bill.

I do not want to lose the housing component on this in an effort to, you know, provide sort of the clean slate using that lingo and that committee.

But you started off by saying, "We wanna get something passed". So if we could do that, I'll suck up my ego and we'll move right along. But so many people could benefit from this proposed measure. So again, I'll be in touch.

AMY EPSTEIN: I think, you know, the difference between that -- the clean slate, if it passes, will limit some things as to landlords, employers, what they can look at.

But the idea behind this bill is to require all landlords for all perspective tenants to do that kind of individualized assessment which really they should be doing under Fair Housing Law anyway but this kind of sets it in a clean way and applies to everybody.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Cool. Well, thank you so much.

AMY EINSTEIN: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Senator Hwang. Before you leave, guys.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): I just wanted to thank you for your work and just for record, I don't recollect the two young men who testified sharing their name

and details for our records. They did? Okay.  
Okay.

BRENDAN BERNICKER: But my name is Brendan  
Bernicker.

ROB LAROSE: And I'm Rob Larose.

AMY EPSTEIN: And I'm Amy Epler Epstein.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I only knew that because his name  
is Brendan. Have a great day, guys.

AMY EPSTEIN: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Ebony Chisholm? Any relation to  
Shirley? I had to ask. It's black history.

EBONY CHISHOLM: [Laughing] No, I had a feeling  
you'd ask that question. It's actually a married  
name. [Laughing] But gladly taken, I promise you.  
[Laughter]

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Good afternoon.

EBONY CHISHOLM: Yes, good afternoon, good evening  
respectable members of the Housing Committee;  
Chairman McGee, Chairman Anwar, thank you for the  
opportunity to share testimony today.

As mentioned, my name is Ebony Chisholm and I am the  
Managing Director of External Affairs with Educators  
for Excellence Connecticut. We are a teacher led  
organization that works to ensure that teachers are  
a part of the policies that affect them and their  
students.

We are pleased to testify in support of Senate Bill  
106, AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY ON MUNICIPAL  
WORKFORCE HOUSING.

While we are excited to see such legislation brought forward – it does raise the question of who falls under the category of a municipal employee. So we do strongly encourage that any further legislation brought forward include members or employees of the Boards of Education.

Municipalities benefit when their public servants are part of the fabric of their communities. We are all aware that Connecticut needs to diversify its teaching workforce. However, based on students who pursue a secondary education, teaching is not the chosen profession of enough people of color to meet the goals of recently passed minority teacher recruitment legislation.

One way to change that is through grow-your-own initiatives, and the best way to seed that is by ensuring that those who currently live in those communities choose to stay.

And this reminds me of people like Ryan Brown. Ryan has been a seventh grade math teacher in Bridgeport for seven years. He loves his job and his students. That's why he makes the 45-minute traffic pending commute from Danbury every day.

Ryan chooses to live at home to save on expenses and continue his own education. He is currently studying to become a school administrator. Like other Connecticut teachers, Ryan has to work multiple jobs in order to support himself and cannot afford to live where he teaches.

According to a national survey, *Voices From The Classroom*, released last month by E4E, 66 percent of Connecticut teachers have reported having to work a second job to make ends meet.

A USA Today article reported last year new teachers cannot afford median rent in most places, and many live far from the schools where they teach, just like Ryan.

We encourage that any bill brought forward take into consideration Education Commissioner Cardona's iteration of last year's House Bill 7226. And we just want to give a shout out to Senator Hwang, Anwar and Representative McGee for their work on that bill last year.

This would enable the Education Commissioner and the state's Housing Commissioner to create a pilot program that would offer housing incentives for shortage area teachers to live within the Alliance District communities where they teach.

If we are serious about achieving the goal of a diverse teaching corps, and ensuring all students have access to quality education, we must include educators that are responsible for the future of our state.

I encourage this Committee to continue discussions around best methods to ensure that teachers have access to quality and affordable housing.

Thank you and E4E is happy to provide any information and answer any questions you may have.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Good timing. Thank you. Thank you so much Ebony, for your testimony and also just reminding us of our efforts last session.

We try to tackle two areas. That is obviously the recruitment of more teachers of color in many of our urban centers and I would dare say this entire state.

And also to figure out how to, on a local level, address some of our blighted properties, provide incentives for municipalities to redevelop these places and encourage teachers to move back into many of these neighborhoods that have been sort of forgotten.

So my question to you, are teachers struggling with finding -- it's a two-part question -- finding affordable housing -- and affordable, you know what I mean by affordable. I'm not talking about \$1500 dollars a month or \$2,000 dollars. Something that's affordable in a safe neighborhood.

And my second part to that question is how would you like to see this particular bill improved?

EBONY CHISHOLM: Sure. Yeah, I think we heard from a lot of our teachers that we work with that -- I'll use the teacher's corner on Asylum Street here in Hartford. That's still, quite frankly, out of their price range.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Too expensive.

EBONY CHISHOLM: That's too expensive. So yeah, I would say, you know, when I talked about teachers like Ryan, you know, he still lives at home and he's been at his school for seven years so I'm sure that his salary has increased over time but still can't afford to move out.

And I also, you know, I think about my sister, who she doesn't teach in Connecticut, she's a first-year education -- first-year educator up in Providence but lives in Westerly, Rhode Island but she still lives at home with my two parents and my grandparents.

And she can't afford to move out but she makes a 45-minute commute, so.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): How would you -- how would you like to see this particular bill improve?

EBONY CHISHOLM: I think just like I mentioned, you know, I think we'd just like it to be taken into consideration that, you know, teachers are a part of the municipalities where they teach on a day-to-day basis and you know, a lot of them would like to move into the communities where they teach.

You know, I think we talk a lot about, you know, what it used to be like to be a teacher. Particularly a teacher of color where, you know, you could go to the grocery store or you could go to the movies and see your teacher. We don't see that anymore.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): No.

EBONY CHISHOLM: Because it's too expensive to live there, so.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Well, I appreciate your feedback and your testimony. Any questions from the committee? Thank -- thank you, have a great day.

EBONY CHISHOLM: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Christie Balka? Christie Balka.

CHRISTIE BALKA: Just like the first time.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): All right, I guess I need to be a bit more confident when I read these names, huh. Thanks for being so patient.

CHRISTIE BALKA: Oh, thank you all for sliding it out for a long day.

Good evening, Representative McGee, Senator Anwar and members of the Housing Committee. My name is Christie Balka and I am Policy Director at All Our Kin.

All Our Kin is a nonprofit organization that trains and supports 40 percent of Connecticut's family child care providers, equipping them with the tools and resources to provide high quality child care while running sustainable businesses.

Many hours ago you heard from Commissioner Bye of OEC that Connecticut has an acute shortage of licensed child care, especially for infants and toddlers.

In the face of this shortage, protecting and expanding family and group child care is a key strategy to increasing the supply.

This is exactly what House Bill 5121, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN PROTECTIONS FOR GROUP AND FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES will do. And I'm here today to ask you to support this bill.

There was no fiscal note on a similar bill last year and once again we expect there will be no additional cost burden on the state. By eliminating burdensome red tape, home-based child care providers will save money on costly legal fees. You heard earlier today about one family child care provider who spent \$20,000 dollars and that's not unusual among the stories that we've heard.

These providers are predominately low-income women of color who don't have the resources to spend on these processes especially before they have income coming in, right? They can't operate until they

receive zoning and the license that allows them to do so.

House Bill 5121 closes an existing loophole that prevents group child care providers from having the same protections that family child care providers currently have.

It does this by amending three separate sections. Section 8-2, 8-3(j) and 19a-80. Section 8-2 already says that municipalities cannot prohibit family or group child care homes in residential areas.

Unfortunately, this hasn't been sufficient to deter municipalities from requiring providers to obtain special exceptions and permits. The end result has been a defect or ban on both family and group child care.

Promoting licensed residential child care in the homes of trained family and group providers would result in significant benefits for children, working parents, small business entrepreneurs and the economy.

Family and group care are particularly important for families that face the largest barriers to accessing care including low-income families that lack stable work schedules, those with extended hours, families of children with special needs and those without a reliable means of transportation.

Connecticut should follow the lead of New York and California in adopting stronger protections against zoning and housing restrictions for home-based care and House Bill 5121 is an important step in this direction.

Protecting and expanding the supply would be a big win, not just for providers but for children, parents, employers and our economy.

Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you so much. Any questions from the Committee? Thank you so much for your testimony.

CHRISTIE BALKA: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Next up we have Kathy. C-O-R-P.

KATHY FLAHERTY: Good evening, Senator Anwar, Representative McGee and members of the Housing Committee. I apologize I did submit my testimony online but I'm not sure it's made it up on the website yet.

I just have comments on a number of the bills that are on your agenda today so I'll make them as abbreviated as I possibly can because you'll get what I wrote eventually.

Senate Bill 105, just concerned about the language may establish that right to shelter and I'm sure you may have heard from people earlier this year about the challenge that's actually posed in other states to the effort to end homelessness because it results in money being spent on keeping people in hotels rather than into permanent housing.

Don't think a task force is necessary for addressing issues in shelters. I think shelter providers need to follow the law. We support bills that increase access to housing for people with criminal records and I just think since we've established a task force on collateral consequences of people with

criminal records that following those recommendations may be the way to go.

And certainly encourage all Connecticut residents to register to vote and participate in the political process but when this similar bill came up last year, I testified a concern that handing out the material when somebody applies for housing may not make sense because of their long wait periods for people to get into the housing so it may be sending them information about like their voting district and stuff that just isn't right.

I'm a Legal Aid lawyer, have been a Legal Aid lawyer for 20 years. I've seen what's happened to tenants when their landlords face foreclosure. I like the idea of requiring landlords to notify tenants when they're under foreclosure but tenants do get notified when that foreclosure process is over. And it's just that in-between period. Then landlord does maintain the right to do what they want with the property and if you have that receivership set up, the landlord may not be able to rescue the property.

I understand the motivation behind it but I'm just curious that some of the language may not accomplish what you want to.

And I think what the bill for release from prison from DOC into the community, I love the idea of helping people make that smooth transition but people should know that the definition of homelessness under Federal law eliminates people who are institutionalized for 91-plus days. So if you're doing that lineup at six months prior to release, they're actually not gonna qualify as homeless so people should just be aware of that.

And I'm concerned about screening everybody and assessing people if you're not making a timely referral for services. So I love the idea, I'm just not sure the language gets you where you wanna go.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you so much for your feedback. Any questions from the committee? Okay. Thank you so much, Kathy.

KATHY FLAHERTY: Thanks.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Jason Primini? Man, you stayed the entire day.

JASON PRIMINI: I did.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Can you just sit at the little -- there you go. Now start all over again.

JASON PRIMINI: All right. So again, my name is Jason Primini and I am a Case Manager here from Columbus House. And I am actually working in a collaborative effort between CSSD and DOH, running the Rapid Rehousing programs that started a few short months ago.

So as the Housing Committee, I'm sure you're very well versed on what the Housing First model is and very aware of, you know, one of the main beliefs behind it is that by helping to provide housing, you know, it eliminates one of the biggest insecurities people are facing and it helps to give them the time and energy that they may need to focus on other areas that they're struggling with.

This is a belief that, you know, us at Columbus House maintain and follow very well.

So for some of our clients, they're you know, focusing on working on their mental health, physical health, trying to find employment, pursuing education or whatever endeavors that they need to be [Inaudible 05:15:49].

So many of the clients that I'm working with that are exiting incarceration are facing many of these issues at the same time, trying to figure out how to deal with them and facing them head on. Not always aware of what services that they even have available to them or how to have access to them.

Upon being released, they don't always have the natural supports or community resources in place to rely on, help guide them. And 211 is here in place to help them mediate that issue and help them locate resources.

But for many of my clients, incarceration and this type of life in the system and homelessness is what they know. So it's one thing to hand them a number and tell them what they need to do to be successful but it's another thing to help provide them with tools and have a plan of action in place that could give them direct accesses to service that would help them to be successful.

So as I mentioned, I've been in this program since it started and I can say some of my initial meetings with clients are completely different a few days out, once they're actually seeing what we're actually working with and what we're actually doing.

Many times they'll come to me and they kind of just think of me at first as another person that they have to meet with and someone that's telling them what they're doing but once we actually start

working on their services and help them, you know, finding housing they start to see like -- all right, maybe this is actually working. Maybe this is something that's gonna be a big change for me.

So I do hold a belief that the rapid rehousing model is a great system for people that are exiting incarceration to help get them reintegrated back into the community.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Quick question for you. How many -- how many clients do you provide supports to and I guess within that number, do all of them request this rapid housing voucher?

JASON PRIMINI: So the referrals come directly to us for rapid rehousing.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Okay, got it.

JASON PRIMINI: So that is how we get them. We are working with court support services and --

REP. MCGEE (5TH): How many, just an estimate.

JASON PRIMINI: So the program is meant to maintain maybe like 15 to 18. As of right now we have nine that are housed and this -- well, the program technically, you know, started up over the summer, it really didn't get going until October.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): October. Okay.

JASON PRIMINI: So since then we've gotten nine different people into apartments. I have one of my clients here with me today.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Awesome.

JASON PRIMINI: And yeah, so we still have room for more.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Okay, thank you. Thank you. Questions from the committee. Thank you so much.

JASON PRIMINI: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Have a great day.

JASON PRIMINI: You too.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Rocha Brown? Good afternoon.

ROCHA BROWN: Good afternoon.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Afternoon, sir.

ROCHA BROWN: My name is Rocha Brown. I'm part of that program. I came home last year, I was homeless. You know, I haven't always been on the right side of the tracks. You know, the pressure of coming home with nowhere to go was really a struggle for me.

Somebody came to me, gave me a card, I made a phone call, I met Jason and then my life began to get better, you know. I mean I've always in the backseat of my life and now I'm in the front seat of my life because I have less stress about where I'm gonna lay my head. So they provided that for me and that's -- that's something -- that's a struggle for everybody who comes home from incarceration.

I just came home last year. This is the longest I've ever been out of incarceration because I've always thought about getting in the backseat. But now I don't think like that. You know, my life is better now, I don't have to stress. I stood up, I put the work in every day and I just think that the

program -- if you want it, you want it, you know. And I just want to -- I just wanna be the best person I can be today.

I haven't always thought like that and this program makes me think like that. Like he said, when I first met him, I just thought this a regular guy just doing his job. But you know, like I told him today, "I'm comfortable with you", because he makes me comfortable. He does his job very well and the program is good -- if it's good for me, it's good for anybody. If anybody can make the change -- if I made the change, anybody can make the change.

And I'm confident and not I'm certain. And I just thank that program for that and I just wanted to share that with y'all. Thank you very much.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Well, thank you for sharing such a powerful story. And your sort of -- how can I put it -- I mean you talk about the backseat but you're definitely in the front seat and who would have thought that you would be testifying before the Legislative Committee on housing. And weighing in on the very important conversation.

It's people like you closest to the actual problem that we all need to hear from to better address the barriers that -- that we're faced with.

So thank you for sharing your story. Please continue to share your story so people could hear that their resources, once you make a decision to make that change in your life.

So I thank you, man, for your testimony and sharing with this committee. Senator Anwar?

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for -- for first waiting but also sharing something that's important because I think this is -- your story is the piece that's been missing for a lot of people to humanize the real challenge.

When we talk about bills, many of the people have the worst case scenarios that they can imagine and that restricts them from not allowing people to get a chance when they are willing to change.

ROCHA BROWN: Yes sir.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): And so people make a mistake but then the society makes a mistake. And if the society makes a mistake, more people suffer. And I think that's why getting your story and getting your message and I make sure -- I guess this has not been recorded, I wish it was because this would've been a good opportunity for everyone. So please post it and tag us. All four of us if you would. If you would allow me to.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): The remaining four of us?

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): And then there were four. But I truly cannot appreciate your coming forward and sharing this with us. I think this bill is hoping to give an opportunity and a chance to people who want to make a change themselves and be able to get help in the best way.

We know from data if anybody's struggling from any illnesses, they will not get better if they don't have a home.

ROCHA BROWN: That's right.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): And a shelter doesn't cut it and then being homeless does not help. So that's why your testimony is very powerful and much needed and I hope we can use this to share with others and if there was a way, Alex, we can probably reach out to him later because we will need your testimony going forward in many other situations. Thank you so much.

ROCHA BROWN: Okay, thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you. And thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and I just wanna say thank you and other members that testify from Columbus House and -- and just hearing your testimony, I hear in your voice that it's a struggle every day.

ROCHA BROWN: Yes it is.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And that having these kind of supportive services are important for you to continue to move forward so I hear you loud and clear but I think the other part of the equation is really sharing that you are out there trying to make a positive change. That you've paid your price. You've learned, you've paid your debt and now you want a clean slate moving forward.

So I applaud you and I hope that in your testimony that you grow in being empowered to step forward every day and make a big contribution. So I want to thank Mr. Chair for the opportunity and I want to thank you and your colleagues for coming up to support these endeavors. Thank you.

ROCHA BROWN: Thank you very much.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Next up, Salmun Kazerounian, I think. If he'll correct me.

SALMUN KAZEROUNIAN: That's good enough for me.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): No, say it. Say your last name.

SALMUN KAZEROUNIAN: Salmun Kazerounian.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Kazerounian. I like that.

SALMUN KAZEROUNIAN: Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. I'm here to testify in support with amendments of Senate Bill 109 and House Bill 5122 which both concern criminal records screening.

For the more than hundred million criminal rec -- Americans who have some type of criminal record in the US access to housing is extremely limited. The center, the Connecticut Fair Housing Center where I'm a Staff Attorney, routinely receives calls from people who have been denied housing often on the basis of not even a conviction record, an arrest -- a charge that was dismissed or for which the person was found not guilty. Or a conviction from many years ago that has no relationship to housing.

Because of the well-documented racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system, criminal record screening may result in race and national origin discrimination and perpetuate segregation and prevents -- and can prevent people recently released from incarceration from accessing decent safe affordable housing which we know is the leading factor in determining whether or not they'll successfully reintegrate into society.

The Center is strongly in support of legislation that limits the landlord's ability to screen on the basis of criminal history and believes in particular that House Bill 5122 can be strengthened in a few ways.

First, the lookback period for felonies is simply too long and it should be based not on the date of conviction or release, whichever's later as it's currently written. But rather on the date of offense. There's a long body of academic research on recidivism and the factors that make someone likely to get to recidivate and what the specific likelihood of recidivism is over time.

And that research generally has shown that from the date of offense with each year, the likelihood of committing a subsequent offense declines until somewhere around the fifth to seventh year after the offense was committed.

The person -- the person with a criminal record is no more likely than someone with no criminal record whatsoever to commit a subsequent offense.

So, should I keep going or should I -- I got conflicting --

REP. MCGEE (5TH): It's okay, I'm the Chair. Wrap up. But we wanna hear your closing -- your closing remarks. We just know that the little buzzer thing went off and we just wanna honor that.

SALMUN KAZEROUNIAN: Sure. So I submitted written testimony which addresses some of the other changes that we want but I wanna -- if you'll allow me, just make a quick point.

First there seems to be a general impression or assumption that the -- that criminal records screening is essential. It's a necessary tool to ensuring the safety of a community and a neighborhood.

First of all, I've never seen any evidence -- any actual statistics showing that any sort of criminal record screening does anything to actually keep an apartment complex safer, reduce the likelihood of subsequent offenses.

But that being -- that being said, I also wanna point out they -- you know, I own my home as I suspect several of you do as well. When my wife and I applied for a mortgage we weren't subjected to a criminal background check and I have no reason to think that my neighbors were either.

Two-thirds of Connecticut's population owns their homes rather than renting which means that two-thirds of Connecticut's population has made a decision to live in a neighborhood where they have no idea whether their neighbors have criminal histories whatsoever. I don't know if my neighbor has an extensive criminal history or none. And I suspect you don't either. Because they weren't screened and I wasn't screened. They don't know if I have a criminal record.

And I don't feel less safe because of it. I don't think most homeowners in Connecticut are clamoring for their -- for someone to come and do background checks on everybody.

So -- so this is not an inevitability, this is not a feature of all rental housing, this is a decision that landlords started to make really in the last 20

to 25 years when instantaneous criminal background screening became possible. Before that it was a much more complicated process and many more landlords just didn't do it. They called references, they checked whether someone's a good tenant and if they were, they would accept them.

So I encourage you all to -- one other point I'd like to make is Mr. Brown who testified right before me. This bill would not have helped him at all. This bill does nothing for Mr. Brown because the lookback period is simply too long to address someone who was released from prison a year ago.

This -- so Mr. Brown would have nine more years to wait before -- before he can comfortably apply for an apartment knowing that his criminal record is not going to serve as a tool to put him on this black list from housing.

So he has nine more years under this bill and if he commits another offense, that clock resets and it doesn't reset yet, it resets when his case is resolved and he's released from prison.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you so much and also thank you, about two years ago you were a part of the initial conversations on how do we support formerly incarcerated reentering the communities. So jobs, housing, health care -- you name it. And your work, you were a part of that process as well.

So thank you so much for your testimony. Any questions, comments from the committee? Senator Anwar.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): I wanted to thank you for a commitment and help in this. Would it be possible

to share some of the data that you have cited? I did not read your testimony but --

SALMUN KAZEROUNIAN: I didn't actually provide any citations or sources in my testimony but I'd be happy to share [crosstalk].

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): If you could that would be helpful because I think part of the data that you cited goes contrary to our perceptions. Or many other people's perceptions. And it's worthwhile to have a citation so that we can actually share with them that there's evidence around it and then that will hopefully be able to help some of our colleagues when they have some concerns.

SALMUN KAZEROUNIAN: Sure. I'd be happy to do that.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much.

SALMUN KAZEROUNIAN: Thank you and thank you for focusing on this issue.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Matt Morgan. And folks, we've got two more. Hold on now, we've got two more and we'll be done.

MATT MORGAN: Hello, good evening. My name is Matt Morgan and I am the Executive Director of Journey Home.

Thank you, Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, esteemed members of the Committee for allowing me to testify tonight.

Journey Home is a nonprofit organization that coordinates the homelessness services in the capitol region. We basically try to work with all of the homeless service provider agencies to make sure that we're improving, doing continuous improvement, to

the whole system of emergency shelter to housing programs.

And I am advocating for the -- on the bill 105, the Right to Housing Bill that it be changed or amended to replace the section that talks about what is essentially a right to shelter.

Some of the other advocates previously talked about the challenges that New York -- New York City and Massachusetts have had where they've implemented a right to shelter and seen the rise of homelessness in those areas. We don't wanna see those same trends happen here.

Also, I would just suggest adding language that includes when you were defining homeless, not to limit it to the HUD definition that is more narrow but making sure you're including all Federal definitions of homelessness which does include the people who are couch surfing and doubled up that Representative McGee asked about earlier under some of the other Federal definitions.

Ultimately, I would just say our -- our homeless services system is clogged. Our shelter system is clogged. And we're not seeing the flow through that system that we need to.

If we could shorten the amount of time people spend in shelter by providing rental assistance to get people moving through the system quicker, then we would be able to further our goals of ending homelessness in the capitol region.

So for example, our length of stay in shelter right now is about 90 days. But if we could get that down to 45 days, we would be able to accommodate the

people in the existing shelter that we already have. So we don't necessarily need to build more shelters and add more shelter capacity through a Right to Shelter bill but rather we need to change the language to rental assistance.

That's the key here is adding rental assistance available to the people who are experiencing homelessness to get them through the shelter system quicker.

So every week, all of what we -- Journey Home convenes all of the homeless service providers in the capitol region to talk about the openings in each of the rental assistance programs and you know, on average we have about seven openings per week.

But we're looking at a list of 500 people in shelter so we need more rental assistance programming to be able to get people through the system quicker.

And I also just want to say thank you to all of you for thinking big. It's very exciting to see these kinds of bills -- there's an assortment of bills -- that are not just doing the same thing that has been done or not thinking in these little incremental ways of improving our system but rather are thinking of attacking these big social problems from a whole bunch of different angles which is exactly what we have to do to make progress.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Matt. We're up here chuckling and laughing because we're like -- yeah, we -- we're trying at least, I think, as a committee to really tackle some of these -- these challenges that many of our communities, providers are faced with.

But not to reinvent or create the wheel, but really to leverage what we're doing. Strengthen some good practices but also think innovatively on addressing homelessness in the state of Connecticut.

One question. Do you agree with the rest of the folks that we shouldn't have a task force on homeless shelters? Do you -- I think it's -- where's my little sheet here. I think it's Senate Bill 107.

MATT MORGAN: I guess -- I don't know what the cost to that would be. Whether or not it would be cost effective, I'm a big proponent of --

REP. MCGEE (5TH): You sound like a legislator. You start [laughter].

MATT MORGAN: [Laughter] I'm a big proponent of additional research and study and learning. I think that's always great. I do think that 99 percent of the time, the shelters are operating the way they should be. They are not -- they're not breaking the laws in the way they operate.

But I would say that in the one percent of the time when they are messing up when the person's not trained appropriately or when there has been a huge issue at one of the shelters, then that's an issue that does come down to compliance with current laws and through some of the forums that we've had already, hearing from different providers, all that needs to happen is a report of that activity to the funder. To the Department of Housing so that they can address it with that agency and correct the action.

And if the problems continue to happen, then the funder should pull that funding from that agency if they're seeing a continuing trend of not accommodating transgender individuals according to the gender that they identify for.

Otherwise, though, the shelters, there's ongoing training, you know, throughout the -- not throughout the year but multiple times a year where they can get information, support from different agencies on this. For years we've been talking about it at the leadership level of making sure the shelters are accommodating people the way they should be and the leadership is all supportive of this at every shelter in the capitol region -- I'm speaking from the capitol region, I don't know the rest of the state.

But I would say if investment could be used elsewhere like in rental assistance, that's where I would want to see it rather than taking a lot of time and energy around the task force.

But if there's resources available then why not, you know, learn more.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much for your testimony. One second, Matt, I think Senator Anwar has a comment or a question.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Matt, thank you for your testimony. And I know we have spoken offline and I looked at some of the language recommendations on 105 and I agree with you, it needs a little bit of modification and improvement.

I think some of the other advocates have also spoken about areas of opportunities. I may bug you offline

later to try and bend down the language and then make sure that the intentions that we were hoping to be able to achieve we can achieve that in some respect.

So thank you for your testimony and again the work that you and your organization do. Thank you.

MATT MORGAN: Happy to help you work on that.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Matt. All right so we have Colleen (sic) Johnson, Pamela Helen (sic) and I think this is Jade Thomas. In that order. And we will close and conclude and wrap up today's meeting.

So Ms. Johnson. Do me a favor and just lift that little button there and then a red light should come on. There you go, thank you.

CONNIE JOHNSON: Good evening, my name is Connie Johnson and I would like to say thank you to the House of Representatives, all those who are here today, to the Chair, Co-Chair and any Senators that's here before me, I'd like to thank you for listening to my test -- testimony today. And for me to testify today.

I am testifying on behalf of the proposed bill 5124 -- 5124, I would like to state that make it illegal for any landlord to not disclose that their home is in foreclosure. And this is to a new tenant.

I know that -- and I thank you for speaking to Commissioner Silese [phonetic] earlier and in my case it was a case where I had signed a lease and I had informed him as to my plans and my goals in two years which was to purchase a new home and to save monies because at the previous place I was at, I was paying not only \$1400 dollars but all of the sewage

bill, gas bill, light bill. HOA was included in the rent.

And so I said, you know what, we're gonna definitely, you know, like try to cut costs and move -- downsize and then save money so we can purchase a home.

He did not disclose that information to me upon signing a lease. And so on October 27 I met with the former landlord at 127 -- 127 DuPont Avenue and I had informed him about all of my plan.

Long story short, I was facing many issues that needed repairing. He did come and repair the less weightier matters. My neighbor came over and that's when we realized it was a leak and prior to that I gave him a 30-day check list. Meaning a leakage was prevalent and it was there in the facility that I was at -- the house I was at.

And so they -- basically a week later after I sent him the 30-day checklist, he came in again and fixed the less weightier matters and he said that he would be back a week later to, you know, fix the leak and when he noticed -- he came back, it was the washing machine he brought. It was basically a lemon washing machine.

But therefore he brought one over and we noticed a collapse in the ceiling. And basically one thing led to another. I kept on trying to get in contact with him for fixing repairs. He had not done that.

And so therefore, auction sign was on the property and you know he said, "Connie, don't be alarmed, I'm gonna get that squared away."

And so upon him not -- you know, he -- basically a month later he said, "We won. I won the case." I said, "You won?" He said, "Yes." And so he said, "My house is out of foreclosure."

And I decided to research and when I researched, it was not out of foreclosure, the law date was just pushed back.

And so I did let him know I don't feel comfortable with, you know, to me it's fraudulent behavior what you're doing. And I'm gonna feel like that, you know, I'm moving you further as to, you know, making any payments for you because you did not, you know, inform me about this house being in foreclosure and you're not making any repairs so it's unjust enrichment.

And again, we had -- can I go on? Okay. And then basically went on to court. I knew I was gonna win because I had evidence. I had witnesses, I had text messages and apparently I did not win.

And then we went -- I took my case to the appellate court. Because I felt that my -- my rights had been violated, rights to due process which my -- fifth and 14th amendment.

And then I had proof of perjury and as we went on to appellate court, his attorney had filed an appearance. And with that appearance, they had dismissed the case.

And so I kept on trying -- trying to get in contact with my case management -- manager. Who did not respond to me after that and I -- I did a writ of error and then they ignored my cries and then I filed a motion for reconsideration?

Right after I filed the motion for reconsideration, the sheriff's was at my door. The day before I filed a motion for reconsideration.

As a result, me and my daughter, we were basically in the streets but we -- I did have enough money to get in a hotel for three weeks before I'm at the place that I am now. I did save up a lot of money and to move to that place but therefore it created so much hardship and had he had informed me that, you know, his house was in foreclosure, I could've made a decision to stay where I was. Which was a [Inaudible 05:44:50] you know, additional years.

Or just you know, say, "Hey, I will move and I know your house is in foreclosure." And I don't any families to ever experience what my daughters and I had experienced.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Well, Ms. Johnson, thank you. Thank you for your great and perseverance to withstand all of the ebbs and flow of the legal system. The housing legal system. And it's unfortunate that you had to go through that but it's probably safe to say that there are probably thousands of individuals that have gone through the same situation.

I'm just glad to know that you were able to -- in the words of my grandmother -- bounce back, you know, and do what it is that you needed to do to take care of your family.

But I also am very happy that you were able to speak to sort of the process and give us some real time feedback on the importance of this proposed legislation.

I think we need to have a bit more conversations with our legal team and to make sure we're going about this the right way.

But you know, I didn't share this with many of the folks around this table here. I remember returning home from college and always said I wanted to purchase my grandmother's two-family home.

My grandmother had passed away. Long story short, the house went into foreclosure. Didn't know it. We purchased the home. Actually we got home one day and there was a foreclosure sign on the fence.

So while this is different from your situation, having a landlord who didn't disclose, I didn't know that the person who actually was caring for my grandmother just couldn't keep up with everything and long story short, we were faced with foreclosure.

Fortunate enough we were able to kind of get the home and make sure everything is, you know, where we are now but it's just those type of situations are not a good thing.

And I'm so glad to hear that you were able to save your money and to move into a place where your girls and you could live comfortably.

So we'll be in touch, ask you a few more questions and to see how your lived experience could help inform this piece of legislation.

Anybody from the committee? Questions, comments?

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much, I had read your testimony and I think I heard your -- somebody had read your message as well from one of your

Representatives. So thank you for standing up and not only sharing your story but asking and expecting us to make sure there's nobody else like you who has to suffer the way you did. That's where leadership comes and we appreciate that.

CONNIE JOHNSON: Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Thank you so much and thanks for staying so long. Thanks a lot. Pamela? And then we'll have -- I think it says Jade, is that correct? Perfect. Jade Thomas will close us out.

PAMELA HELLER: Good evening. Thank you to the members of the Committee for allowing me the chance to address you this evening, this late. I appreciate your perseverance here.

I also want to echo, to begin. First of all, my name is Pamela Heller and I'm testifying in support of Senate Bill 105. And I want to start by echoing what some other advocates have expressed which is a real sense of relief and gratitude among us that these issues are getting the attention that they're getting and we appreciate the leadership of members of this committee in bringing an issue like the right to housing into the conversation when it wasn't necessarily there before.

I submitted written testimony. We do have, as other advocates, have suggested some ideas and changes for the language of the bill and to achieve its intended purposes.

I'm not gonna go over those because they are in my written testimony. What I'd like to do instead is address one of the issues that was raised repeatedly

in some of the written testimony by landlords. And that specifically is the right to legal representation which is addressed in the bill.

So as a Fair Housing Attorney, I don't do a lot of eviction work. Mostly I bring plaintiff side housing discrimination cases. However, within the last couple of years, we've seen that legal services agencies have far more demand than they can provide and so we've started taking on some of those cases as well and I've had the opportunity in the last year to litigate for some repressive cases.

And I just want to share, in two of those cases, my involvement actually resulted in the process not needing any court involvement whatsoever because I was able to negotiate something directly with the attorney. So we never had to appear in court and I think that was a great outcome for those landlords.

I also want to point out that most landlords are represented in the process as whereas most tenants are not currently represented and you know, this is a discrepancy that has real -- a real impact. Tenants who have representation are less likely to face judgement.

Now, in addition to having a criminal record, the next biggest problem for tenants in finding housing is having an eviction record. So if by having legal representation -- and I'll just wrap up very quickly. And having legal representation, if they're able to avoid that judgement, it makes it far easier for them to find housing in the future.

I'll wrap up there.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you so much. Any questions from the committee? Thank you. Thank you so much.

PAMELA HELLER: Thank you so much. Good night.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Lastly, Ms. Thomas.

JADE THOMAS: [Clears throat] Excuse me. Good evening. My name is Jade Thomas, I'm the Policy Fellow for All Our Kin. I'm here to be a voice for another provider. We actually received an email this afternoon from an educator that wanted to be here but was so scared of the consequences from her landlord that she decided not to share her story.

So I'll be sharing a story from another educator. I'm a provider in southern Connecticut who provided child care in a rental home with her landlord's permission. She actually moved twice to larger units owned by her landlord to serve more families.

Each time she saw and received approval from the state of Connecticut's Child Care Licensing Agency, OEC but after relying on her landlord's promises, the landlord evicted her because of her child care business despite no indication that it had negatively impacted any neighbors.

And this was unfortunate because not only did she lose her business but the community lost affordable child care.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Wow, thank you. The spirit of brevity. Man. Thank you and we hear that story loud and clear among all of the other testimonies that we received on this particular proposal.

Thank you for your work as a Fellow. You're doing an outstanding job with All Our Kin, correct?

JADE THOMAS: Yes.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): And I see you brought out all of your posses today which was absolutely amazing to speak on such an important issue and to inform this committee on our next steps.

So thank you so very much for waiting out the 6:00 hour to share with us such testimony. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and I just wanted to say -- Jade, great job. We saw you at the cafeteria, you were allocating even then. So thank you for sticking it out. Really appreciate your work. Thank you.

JADE THOMAS: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you so much and I believe that concludes our hearing today. Our next public hearing is on Thursday, February 27th and we will be in room 2-A.

Again, thank you so much to all of you. Staff, thank you for being here and staying the long hours. And you're asking a time -- at 12:30. At 12:30 we'll start promptly. And that's for the public hearing.

All right? Thanks again. Have a great evening, folks.