

HOUSING AND BONDING
COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

12:30 P.M.

CHAIRPERSON: Representative Brendon
McGee, Senator Saud Anwar

SENATORS: Kushner, Hwang

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

REP. MCGEE (5TH): of this legislative session. I want to go ahead and get started. We have the first hour allocated to our agencies elected and legislators, if you would. At this time, we're going to start off with our Commissioner of the Department of Housing. Before we jump in, I don't actually see the Commissioner, but as soon as she comes in, she would follow right after our first speakers. But, I'm going to turn the mike over to Senator Anwar.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Mr. Co-Chair. Welcome, everyone. We are looking forward to hearing your concerns. I just want you to be aware that I am supposed to be in three other rooms right now; so, if I leave for a little bit, it's just to be in some of the other rooms where there are specific votes around committees. But, I'll be here most of the time. Thank you, again, for being here.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Again, good morning, and I would like to welcome the Commissioner of Housing, Commissioner Seila Mosquera-Bruno who will speak on several bills. Good afternoon, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Good afternoon, Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, Senator Hwang, and Representative Zullo. Thank you for having me.

You do have my written testimony. I will just emphasize a couple of points in a couple of them, and if you have any questions, I'm here to help you to answer those.

On 5244 - AN ACT CONCERNING ADDITIONAL HOUSING PROTECTIONS FOR A VICTIM OF FAMILY VIOLENCE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOH is in support of the proposed legislation to add additional housing protections for a victim of family violence or sexual assault. DOH along with HUD administers Connecticut's Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Rapid Rehousing Program. It is a collaboration that enhances survivor access to housing resources while providing trauma-informed survivor-centered support services necessary to achieve financial and housing stability.

On 5245 - AN ACT INCREASING THE PERMISSIBLE AMOUNT OF SECURITY DEPOSIT A LANDLORD MAY CHARGE, we are strongly opposed. It will impact significantly our families low-to-moderate income to be able to access housing.

On 5246 - AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF FAIR SHARE HOUSING, you have my written testimony. I just want to emphasize that the Department of Housing is actually -- is going to be conducting a study -- is going to hire a consultant and in partnership with the Department of Social Services, we will have a study for the whole state, actually, to get information on the need for affordable housing at the different levels, and the study on the share housing will be a little costly for the Department.

Bill 5240 - AN ACT CONCERNING REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING. There is a lot

in this bill. We would really like to work with the drafters of this bill. It has many implications that will result in very expensive construction, especially under rehab. Although it says it is for new construction, in the definition it includes rehab, too. So, we would like to talk to the drafters of this bill and work with them. It also implies a lot of code enforcement and code revisions which we have to go through the Building Inspectors for the Code Standards. And that's it for me right now.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you so much, Commissioner. Thank you for your work and your leadership. I'd also like to thank you and the Governor for allocating some funds to families displaced by the earthquake that happened on the Island of Puerto Rico. So, we applaud you for your support in that. We know you have a tall, tall task ahead trying to address all of the many challenges this State has been faced with, with respect to the development of housing, the preservation of housing, and all of the other issues that communities throw your way. I'm sure that the Committee has questions; so, I'm going to yield the floor to any of our members that might have a few questions or so. Is that a signal, Senator, for you to go, or Representative Dauphinais, please?

REP. DAUPHINAIS (44TH): Hi, good afternoon. Thank you for coming. My question is regarding the study. Are you suggesting that we don't need to do that because you're going to be doing a thorough study with number 5246?

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Yes.

REP. DAUPHINAIS (44TH): Okay, that was my question.
Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Representative.
Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank
you, Madam Commissioner, for coming. I think the
first bill, 5244 in regard to the housing protection
for victims of family violence and sexual assault,
just for the record, it is to encourage landlords to
fund the replacement of locks in the cases of
domestic violence incidences or reports. Would that
be correct?

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Yes.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And, I don't see it as a huge
fiscal note, but can you share with the Committee in
regard to the importance of that sense of security
and that sense of safety of changing locks in such
volatile exchanges.

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: I'll give you an
example. When I was a housing provider, I had a
resident in one of my buildings, and her husband was
abusive, and she moved into this apartment by
herself with her two kids. She went to one of the
meetings with the residents, and she told everybody
that the man that was her husband was not allowed
into the building. We had said that, but she
reinforced it. And we had security with big doors
where common areas where you had keys. So, she told
everybody that that guy was not supposed to be in
the building because of her protection. And we
changed it multiple times because if somebody moved
out and had those keys making copies of, then there
was no sense of security. But having just that

protection really can help somebody going through domestic violence and the protection is just -- especially when you have kids.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you. I appreciate the clarification. And in regard to the rest of your testimony with the ones that the Department opposes, is there any flexibility in working with the Committee and its leadership to be able to reach compromises and best policies that incorporate all the inputs of the shareholders?

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: We always are open to work with the Committee. Anytime I think we can bring the staff that are knowledgeable -- some of my staff. We can also get some professional help, and I do have an architect in-house, and she actually gave us the feedback on some of the bills specifically, but, of course, absolutely.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): An in closing, I want to echo the Chairman's appreciation for yourself and the Governor's support of the difficult challenges in housing and resources in Puerto Rico. So, thank you very much on that. But also I want to commend your leadership and your insight and leadership on the issue of affordable housing throughout the entire state, in the cities as well as in our suburbs and rural settings. The application we've heard many a time of 8-30g and real needs of affordable housing throughout the entire state. I think I've had many conversations with you in regard to your background in really cultivating public-private solutions and incorporating local community input to creating solutions of diverse and affordable, as well as Workforce housing.

I want to be able to commend you in public for your leadership on that area and my look to you for guidance and collaboration to further increase housing stock but to do it in a manner that is truly a federal, state, and local input but also incorporate local buy-in to create the highest and best sustainable solution. So, I want to publicly acknowledge your leadership in that area and my desire to work very closely with you to addressing this issue because it's a volatile issue, and I know in the Housing Committee we've addressed a number of them in the past, but moving forward, I think we need more than ever to have all participant shareholders engaged in the conversation; nonetheless, the local municipal input, as well. So, thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Any other comments, questions? Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Commissioner. There are a number of bills on today's agenda that deal with abatement of taxes for various reasons. I've circled three of them, 186, 3238, and 3239. Have you had the chance to look at those, and, if so, could you tell me where those taxes would be made up from is we abate the requirement of the tenant to pay or the homeowner to pay or the Housing Authority to pay. Who makes up the difference?

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: So, I haven't read all of them. I haven't had a chance yet. But if I have one of my staff.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Representative, do you mind repeating the question, and please state your name for the record.

REP. SMITH (108TH): I'd be happy to repeat it, Mr. Chairman. The question is there are several bills on today's agenda that deal with the abatement of taxes, and my question is who makes up for the difference. Somebody's not paying the tax; where does that money come from?

MICHAEL SANTORO: Thank you. Mike Santoro; I'm the Director of Policy and Research at the Department of Housing. The predominant changes associated with the legislation that I've seen are related to some older statutes associated with the payment in lieu of taxes on the state's Moderate Rental Housing Projects. A number of years ago, the legislature stopped funding that particular program. The legislature took additional steps to waive payments by the local Housing Authorities to municipalities for those projects. So, right now, no one is paying any tax payments or payments in lieu of on those properties. That tax abatement on that pilot waiver is actually set to expire in June. Those projects will be subject to a payment in lieu of come July 1, which means the tenants through their tenant rents will be making those payments.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Thank you for that clarification. So, are these bills designed then to alleviate the obligation of the tenant to pay that and go back to the status quo that we're in now?

MICHAEL SANTORO: Not the status quo. Go back to the -- I believe the legislature stopped funding the program, I want to say back in the early 2010s,

2010, 2011. This would, in fact, not go back to the status quo of that time. It would, in fact, expand the state's responsibilities to make a payment in lieu of on behalf of the Housing Authorities. So, it not only goes back to what we used to do, it takes that and opens the door wider for other properties which were not participating in the payment in lieu of back then but actually would add more projects to that program.

REP. SMITH (108TH): And do we have an estimated cost of what that would be.

MICHAEL SANTORO: I have not done a fiscal note on that one yet. Typically we wait a little longer in the process to see if a bill actually has serious potential. I can tell you that when we stopped funding the program it was making payments equal to 66 percent of the payment in lieu of that would have been due on those projects, and at that time, it was about a \$2.2 million dollar cost if you were to follow the -- and I forget which bill, in particular -- if you were to follow the directions of the bill where the state would be obligated to pay, you're talking somewhere in the neighborhood of 5-plus million.

REP. SMITH (108TH): All right. Thank you for that. And just one final question through you, Mr. Chairman. So, the last session I'd raised an idea. It went nowhere, which is pretty much what happens to most of my ideas, but I'm okay with it. I believe we had at the last public hearing some testimony on individuals who have a criminal record and are trying to get back into housing and some erasure of some of the records to allow them to go back into housing and become a great member of

society. And the proposal I had or the idea I had last year, was along these lines of tax abatements or tax credits. And my thought was, you know, listen, you have a landlord with two applications. They both look very similar except one has a criminal record, and one does not. And the landlord says, "Well, they both look good to me, but this person has a record, this person doesn't; I'll go with the person who doesn't." It's just -- it's how it works, typically. My thought was if we give the landlord an incentive via tax credit and just say, "I'm going to take a chance on this person who has a criminal record." They've seemed to clear their situation up. I'm not aware of -- it's been a while since the record, the crime took place, and if we give that landlord a credit towards the payment of taxes, they may be more inclined to actually lease the property -- I guess it would be leasing the property -- to that particular individual. Any thoughts on that? Is that just another crazy idea from Representative Smith?

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: I'll let you answer that.

MICHAEL SANTORO: Thank you, Commissioner. Representative, I don't know that it's a crazy idea; it would be difficult to administer, in all honesty. First, how do you verify their landlord's, in fact, renting to someone who has a criminal history? Whoever is responsible for compliance would actually have to know about the tenants, about their criminal history, be able to match that information up. You're talking about a fairly labor-intensive concept. I think the idea of incentives for landlords isn't necessarily a bad one. It's how do

you do it, I think, and if this is something that you're interested in talking about, I'd be happy on behalf of the Department to sit down some time and have a conversation. I've been doing affordable housing for about 34 years now. I think I've got a pretty good idea of what works and what doesn't. I'm happy to sit down and talk to you if you want to try to fashion something in the form of an incentive for landlords.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Well, I appreciate that, sir. I'm assuming the Chairman is willing, as well, because I don't want to just waste your time or mine if it's not the goal of the chairman. I think the goal of everybody on this particular Committee is to make sure that those, whoever it may be, have a chance to have real housing, affordable housing, get back into society, and have a place to live. They come out of prison, and, you know, it's hard to find housing, and it's hard to find a job, and, you know, the cards are stacked against them. I get that. So, if we can find some way besides just, okay, we're going to erase your record, if we can find some other way to say, "Listen, here's an opportunity for you to actually have some housing and have a job and become a member of society. I'm happy to work with you. So, if the Chairman's inclined to do that, as well, maybe the three of us could sit down.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Representative Smith. I actually think this is a great conversation that we're having, and I'm glad publicly you are onboard with the concepts that we raised during our last public hearing which focused solely on this idea of discussing how we actually eliminate barriers for

individuals who are justice-impacted. And I think we're onto something. If I had to respond immediately, I would say everything above that you just so eloquently shared with us. We need to incentivize landlords, we need to incentivize local municipalities to really figure out how can we address this concern that we've had for so many years. But I do believe this Committee, we have a vehicle that would offer landlords an opportunity to be, I think, a part of the conversation, as well. There've been multiple groups, some of them in this room and most likely will be testifying today, that have worked on many different committees, specifically on housing to figure out this very idea -- how can we eliminate barriers that are presented to those who are saying, "Look, I've done my time, I did what I had to do. I'm just looking for housing."

I'm not naïve. I'm not a novice, although I haven't been 40 years in the housing arena. You still look young; you still look young. But I do believe that there is some reservation, and I respect that. I mean, as a landlord myself, I, too, want to have that conversation with the individual, but I also am very aware that if I were to ask each and every one of you who own a home, "Do you actually know the background of your next-door neighbor?" And it really doesn't matter what town you live in in this instance. The very person who serves as your neighbor may have given you some cookies or came over to make sure your children were good, and, lo and behold, they have a criminal history. And, so I'm asking, and I appreciate it, Representative Smith, that we come together and we really talk about what are those ways that might be data-driven

and be able to help us to move the needle forward during this session in providing individuals impacted by the justice system and opportunity to quality housing.

So, I know that was a very long-winded response, but it's needed.

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Can I share just one thing?

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Please, please.

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: One quick story, and this was because of Friday, my previous crew of maintenance guys, one of them was leaving from my previous job, and they invited me to go and have dinner with them. And one of them was talking about the keys. "Oh, remember when she said don't give him any keys"? And I listened to him like, why did I say that, why? And he was actually -- seven years ago, he came out from jail, no family, and he came to our office to ask us for a job. And my maintenance supervisor offered him a job cleaning the properties, and he took it. It was a part-time job, and he was eager to learn and wanted to do more, and his boss gave him a job, a full-time job. He didn't have a place to live. He gave him an apartment, one of the apartments that we had and we needed to rehab. And then he came to me and said, "Actually I gave him the job; he's so good. He works really hard. He's learning." And I said, "But don't give him any keys for the apartments because I have families," and I'm looking at the families, right? I don't know his background. So, I asked what happened. They told me what happened. And I said, "Don't give him any keys." And seven years

later, he was my best maintenance guy, and today when I went over there, he still calls me the boss. He was so loyal. He learned so many things, and although he has been asked to go and work for some other agency that know his job, he said this organization gave me a place, and it's my home. And although you're not here, you are my boss. So, just because of the keys, because I'm like, "What are you talking about? I didn't give you keys?"

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I appreciate that.
Representative Gonzalez and then, Senator Anwar.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I've got a question maybe you or he maybe can answer the question, but I always got a problem when people say *affordable housing* when we know that most of the affordable housing here in Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport. But when you say affordable housing, my opinion is if it is affordable housing, it's the same concept in every single town. Like, let's say, okay, you build affordable housing here in Hartford and affordable housing by, you know, by the numbers that said that the rent is going to be between this and this. But when you say affordable housing out of Hartford, Bridgeport, New Haven, is that the same like, the fact that you have built affordable housing where, in the suburb maybe -- I don't know -- I don't want to be specific because I don't want to get in trouble because -- but affordable housing is the same concept, is the same -- is it going to be the same amount of rent if it is built, you know, out of Hartford, Bridgeport, or New Haven.

So, in the experience that I have had with building affordable housing, and I really don't like the word affordable housing because the housing is actually

built to a higher standard than regular market housing with more energy efficiencies, with more amenities in many cases. What it is for me is that we're providing affordable rent where people actually can afford a place to live. And many times, and if this is not locally but nationally, we struggle with how to find the right definition. There was a campaign a couple years ago called Home Matters because we were just trying to make sure that it is about a place to live. Because it is not cheap housing, and, so, affordable housing implies that it's cheap. Well, affordable housing, the way that we're building it is expensive, and it's very energy-efficient, and we have very high standards. So every time, people say affordable -- well, no, it's not affordable. It's affordable rent. We're providing a place where families can access a place with the means that they have. Because we don't have vouchers for everybody. So, everybody has to live within their means, and usually it's between -- salary is what, between --

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: It's about 30 percent of somebody's income regardless -- the definition from HUD is 30 percent of your gross income annually regardless of whether you make \$10,000 dollars or \$100,000 dollars. If you can afford, you pay 30 percent, you are in an affordable housing.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): So, if my salary, my income, is \$100,000 dollars a year, can I apply for affordable housing.

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: No, no, no, no, no. The definition of being in an affordable place or being able to afford a place is 30 percent of your income. The housing that we have been building, and

this is from my knowledge entirely -- I mean, Michael will have other experience -- is families between 25 percent of the area median income, and we build up to market rates because you also want to have a mixed-income and diversity so you don't create places where only poor people live.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): So also you rent at the market value?

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: The ones that have \$120,000 dollars, they would pay market value. And the house is the same. It's no different, same quality.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): The same quality. Okay, thank you.

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: You're welcome.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Good afternoon, Commissioner. Thank you so much for being here, and thank you for your leadership, and thank you for your responses to some of the bills, and when I saw your responses, I appreciate them, and can understand where you're coming from. I want to ask you a question on S.B. 188, and I'll tell you this was not one of the bills that you have commented on. It's AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE HEALTHY HOUSING ASSISTANCE PILOT PROGRAM. And I know that our state has done some very important work in collaboration with one of the children's hospitals and in a group where we are trying to see how asthma-related issues, lead-poisoning-related issues, indoor environment. Ninety percent of the time, we live indoors, and some of the homes are associated with significant health-related challenges, especially amongst the young children. And we are trying to see if there

was an opportunity to make that more robust in our limited-resource environment. If you can comment, and then if Michael can comment on the experience and then the outcomes that we are seeing because my feeling is that this is going to reduce the healthcare costs if we look at this in more depth.

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Yeah, I haven't reviewed it, but Michael, I think you have.

MICHAEL SANTORO: Thank you, Commissioner. Senator Anwar, I appreciate the sentiment. We recognize and have been a participant in a statewide initiative known as the Healthy Homes Initiative for essentially since it began. We recognized that Connecticut and a couple of cities, in particular, had the highest asthma rates in the country. Doing something about that is a critical part of the concept of Healthy Homes. The particular bill that you're proposing, I believe, intends to put 50 new rental-assistance vouchers on the street -- 25 in the first year and 25 in the second year. That does not come inexpensively. As a state agency, we fully support the Governor's budget as proposed, but if such an initiative were to pass, do I believe that it would be helpful relative to the target population, to address the issue in the long-term? I can't disagree with the concept.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): So, here's why I think we sometimes have challenges. Because we have different departments, different commissioners. If we had a Department of Public Health Commissioner over here, Department of Corrections. We are putting money into the Department of Corrections; that money could be saved from the Department of Correction and moved to the Department of Housing.

Similarly, Department of Public Health money could come into the Department of Housing because obviously we have a bias around here. The housing is the central of the well-being of a family, and if we actually can put resources there, we would reduce the budget on the health side and also on the Department of Corrections side, and the overall budget of the State of Connecticut would not necessarily be negatively impacted. Again, I'm putting it simply, but this is what the reality is.

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: I like that. But I don't think my colleagues would like it, taking money from their budgets.

MICHAEL SANTORO: And allow me to say it in a slightly different way. The concept of spending today to save tomorrow, especially as it relates to healthcare, is not a new initiative or a new concept. How you do it, whether you do can get it done. The issue becomes documentation of the actual savings to show that you accomplished what you intended to accomplish. Healthy Homes has talked about this for a while in terms of Medicare/Medicaid and the reforms around those two programs in taking the savings that are achieved by improved health outcomes and using them to achieve, in fact, better health, is something that should be supported. I can't speak to which ones will work because until you do them and until they do, you just don't know. But from a conceptual standpoint, it certainly would seem to lead us to believe that if you can put people in a better situation to prevent declining health or to offer improved health, that the savings are real.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): I can tell you that this is not rocket science; this has been done by other states, and there's plenty of data. I think we may be a little behind in this aspect. We are way ahead in many of the others, but on some of these areas on the Department of Corrections end and also Department of Public Health, and we are a little behind in saving money on that end and then putting more into the Department of Housing, and we don't need to rewrite the book because it's been written. We just need to read it. And, so, I think it's worthy to look at that approach. And I actually just want to thank you for supporting the 5244, as well. So, I think, again, this is going to give security and safety to victims of domestic violence, and I'm glad your Department is behind this, as well.

One of the other parts that we have talked about is the using of opportunities due to expand Workforce housing, and I think Senator Hwang touched on that, as well. So, 184, it touches on that, and it's a work in progress, but there are some areas of opportunity, and I want to work with your office to make sure we can come up with a way to create public-private partnerships so the State's investment -- we are trying to be on a debt diet, and that actually reduces our investment in some respects on new developments which I have mixed feelings about. But I do feel if we create policy that is going to invite more private investment and then collaborate with some tax incentives, we may have an opportunity to create win-win strategies, and then I think this is trying to look into ways to be able to achieve that in collaboration with the towns, in collaboration with the state, and also

with the federal government. And this is, again, going to not only help reduce the cost of housing but also create opportunities for Workforce housing, especially for the municipal workforce including the teachers, including the fire department, and the first responders. I think we may be able to come up with something good if we work in a manner that allows us to be able to achieve some of these goals. I think that it needs some work, and I understand that, and we have an initial plan, but we will be working closely with you on this in your office. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Any further questions or comments for the Commissioner? Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, Michael.

COMMISSIONER MOSQUERA-BRUNO: And thank you to you guys. I really appreciate the fact that we can meet with you guys, we can go over sometimes laws when I was in the other side, that put barriers into doing the job and to produce more and do it more quicker. So, I really appreciate the fact that we can work together, we can bring that knowledge that we have, what works, what doesn't work, and make it a lot easier for all of us because sometimes, for me, less is more, and if we all work towards the same goal which is to provide housing that is decent and safe and healthy for our families is what we all want to accomplish.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, Commissioner. Have a great afternoon. I'm going to call up, I think, a group of legislators -- Representatives Devlin and Farnen. This is the entire City of Fairfield, Town of Fairfield? Just for anyone who's speaking, just be sure to give us your name for the record.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): So, first of all, Co-Chairs Anwar, Representative McGee, Senator Hwang, Representative Zullo, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you so much for letting us first, all kind of come as a group, which we hope is also more efficient for your Committee proceedings this morning. My name is Representative Laura Devlin, and I'm here with Representative Farnen, and we've had several members of a neighborhood group which included Sidney Watrous, Tom McManus, James White, Meghan McCloat, and also Collin Baron.

I want to thank you for raising for a public hearing S.B. 185 - AN ACT EXCLUDING CERTAIN FACILITIES FROM THE DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY RESIDENCES FOR ZONING PURPOSES. You know, the issue of mental health and drug addiction is vast, it is widespread, it has certainly affected my family, and I would imagine that every single person in this room could probably say the exact same thing. And there is a real mischaracterization of what S.B. 185 is trying to accomplish. It is not at all a measure to limit the opportunities for people in protected classes to live or to exist in our communities at all. In fact, it is quite the opposite. We believe firmly it is inappropriate and unlawful for corporations to exploit group home protections by applying for commercial use of residential properties, and probably the easiest way I can explain this is that a group home is just that. It is intended for the individuals who live there; it is their home. They may go to school. They may go to work. They may go to the library, to doctors' appointments, to wherever, but they come back home. The patients who would come to these medical treatment facilities leave their homes, go for treatment, and then they

return home. So, it's a distinction that we feel is very clear.

We've got several people here. I just want to turn this to Representative Farnen to make a few comments, and then our neighbors have some things to share.

REP. FARNEN (132ND): And I want to keep this really short. I just want to add that group homes are vital to our community, and if we water down group homes or allow individuals to use them for purposes outside their intended purposes, I think that, in essence, threatens the importance of group homes which are vital to Fairfield and this entire State. So, I just wanted to add that because I think it's a very important part.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): And if I could not introduce Meghan McCloat who's also with Neighbors for Neighbors in Fairfield. Meghan also has a master's in public health. I think her first job was with Autism Speaks but has some things to add.

MEGHAN MCCLOAT: Thank you so much. Thanks again for the opportunity. First, I'd like to start by saying it is most clear that there has never been a more important time in our history, specifically in our state, to get substance abuse treatment right. Quality delivery of mental health care and treatment is imperative to the health outcomes of the patients whose lives literally depend on the prudence and rational decision-making of those who manage these residential treatment centers. There has been much discussion lately regarding local towns and neighborhood groups, not understanding the group home definition the private facilities are utilizing

in order to circumvent zoning regulations. They even go so far as to say that some of us are ignorant to the Federal law protections afforded to group homes.

I'd like to address that invalid assumption up front, make it clear on the record that there is absolutely no mistake in our misunderstanding of the Federal law pertaining to group home protections afforded by the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. When it comes to private commercial activity of operating substance abuse treatment facilities that refuse to accept insurance or any state funding, I have yet to identify a single Federal regulation that protects commercial activity to the tune of millions of dollars in revenue as worthy of a protected treatment for a protected class to justify zoning exemption.

It's important to note at the outside that even without the proposed change in legislation before you in Section 8-3e, many corporations in Connecticut are in direct violation of operating these mental health residential living centers and substance abuse treatment facilities in these residential zones. They claim that they're group homes without qualifying the requirement that's already codified that requires them to receive funding from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. They are already in violation of the law, yet nobody is regulating them. Nobody's regulating them because the language is so unclear, and it has created a glaring loophole by which corporations take advantage daily, targeting the State of Connecticut specifically as its next

investment venture. And nobody has stopped the abuse of this group home term.

The intention of 8-3e is very well placed. The intention of the group home designation is to provide a protection for the members of the community who require special exceptions to the local zoning regulations in order to live productive, meaningful lives which contribute to the fabric of our communities in which they reside. The OHS, Office of Health Strategy, within the Department of Public Health is charged with the monumental task of distinguishing facilities that are exempt from the certificate of need program. Those that qualify as health care treatment facilities require a certificate of need and some of them do not; those are group homes. They already make it clear who is practicing commercial health care activity and who is simply providing long-term residential services for residents that require the protections of sustainable living environments in group settings. They have already declared that these corporations are not that type of activity.

The health care facility models that are abusing this term that we're talking about today, target out-of-state patients between the ages of 18 and 26 years old. They suffer from substance abuse addition and co-occurring mental health disorders, and they propose a 60- to 90-day treatment model at the cost of up to \$1300 per day, which amounts to over \$100,000 for 90 days of treatment before they return home to their home states all over the country. They refuse to accept State Husky Medicaid funding, and they are not in-network with a single Connecticut insurance provider. It is an entirely

private-payer model, self-pay even, and it presents a tremendous risk to the status of mental health care treatment in the State of Connecticut. These facilities are prohibiting access to mental health treatment for those that can't afford to pay their exorbitant costs, arguably those who need their services the most. They charge desperate families \$30,000 dollars a month. They pay professional top-notch staff salaries, and they concentrate qualified providers to work in facilities that refuse to treat some of the patients who can't afford their care.

What may seem like a very complicated issue can be reduced to a very separate comparison. Group homes protect the residential livelihood of protected class members who rely on those protections to be free from discrimination in accessing a safe place to live for the term of their life. This simply cannot be the same intention to extend to commercial activity in a residential zone simply to provide high-cost, low-quality healthcare that refuses to be regulated by state funding programs. Operating a lucrative rehab center is not the same as protecting where residents of a protected class live.

The very intention of group homes is undermined at the most basic level because of state law. Profit-driven commercial facilities count towards what is a statutory maximum already codified in law of 0.01 percent of a municipality's population. This abuse of the term *group home* directly limits and threatens the number of group homes that nonprofit organizations, who do tremendous work day in and day out, provide housing for the intellectually disabled, the chronically ill, and those who require protections for long-term residential living. This

abuse can hardly be the intention of the Housing Committee when it promotes housing protections for the disabled members of our community. While these corporations are literally cash-cranking the fast track for the promised road of recovery, it's only at the expense of the intellectually disabled, the chronically ill, and even the underinsured substance abuser who's just seeing affordable housing, all of whom are desperate for a safe, protected place to live.

These are not homes. They are medical treatment facilities, at best. The Office of Health Strategy has already distinguished that for us. It's time that the State of Connecticut protects the intention of group homes to house those who truly intend on living there for the length of that person's life. A 90-day or less term treatment recovery program barely satisfies the term of a sublease. Let's stop subletting the rights of protected, affordable group housing to commercial corporations. There's already a zone for that commercial activity. Thank you very much.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you very much. I know we have a time limitation. We do have -- I don't know, Tom, if you wanted to make some comments or we want to have the letter. If you could indulge us.

TOM MCMANUS: Hello, everyone, thank you for the opportunity to speak. So, many neighbors in our community have loved ones with a disability or have dedicated their life's work to serving disabled.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Sir, do you mind stating your name?

TOM MCMANUS: Yes, I'm sorry. Tom McManus, Fairfield, Connecticut resident. We're keenly aware of the importance for empathy and care for the disabled. You have heard from a member of our community, or you're about to hear from a member of our community whose son has autism spectrum disorder and who would be directly impacted by Newport Academy and the likes opening an MH RLC in Fairfield. Group home protections for her son would not be possible at the home he lives in if MH RLCs are allowed to operate under a group home designation. This operator makes accusations of NIMBY behavior, and they are insulting and prove that they are out of touch with our community.

This operator and their private equity backer plan to bring Wall Street beyond Main Street. They plan to bring Wall Street to residential communities. Individuals with intellectual or physical disabilities that include a range of conditions such as dementia, autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, AIDS, and many other conditions rely on assisted-living resources that are often limited in availability. Many families struggle to meet the challenges associated with a disability that a loved one might endure. These families cannot provide the daily care for the wellbeing of their child, parent, or other family member. They rely on group homes as the answer to full-time permanent residents. Long-term residential options in a home setting are critical for the pooling of resources in order to provide a sound quality of life. Groups of individuals requiring similar needs can share in the cost and make access more affordable for each individual.

I'm going to stop with this written testimony here and briefly state that my experience in this field is not in this field directly. I'm in banking. My wife is a behaviorist, board-certified, and in the 15 years that I've been with her, she's introduced me to many, many families with ASD. These families are interacting from early intervention all the way up to their teenage years and beyond. All right? These kids age up to become adult and need to be placed into group homes. Their parents will some day pass on. These people need -- these families want to work together to potentially build their own group homes. Friends that start being affected by a similar circumstance, they want to pool their resources together and establish a home. I'll stop there, and we'll go with some testimony here that's been provided by somewhat a family with ASD and how they are directly impacted by this organization that is a medical facility looking to operate as a group home within our community.

SIDNEY WATROUS: Hi, I'm Sidney Watrous, and I've been asked to read a letter from a family that is next to the proposed medical facility.

My wife and I and our four children live directly across the street from one of two locations that are proposed to be used as a medical facility. We have four children including twin girls who attend the nearby elementary school, a teenage daughter who is attending the local high school, and a young adult son who is severely intellectually disabled and who lives with us at home. Our son, who is a joy, is nonverbal, has the mind of a small child, and will require round-the-clock care for the rest of his life. When we purchased our home in Fairfield seven

years ago, we chose a home we felt could keep our son and three daughters safe. It has always been our dream to find a home that we could leave to our son after we pass away so that he could stay in a familiar and meaningful place after we are no longer here.

Our home in Fairfield was a stretch for us, and we used our life savings to purchase it. We found a home with a little bit of extra land that would enable us to establish a very small, family farm which serves as our son's life vocational program. We opened our farm to children and adults with developmental and other disabilities. We work the farm ourselves and have devoted the last seven years to building a home and farm for our children and the children and adults with disabilities who are part of our farm.

Our greatest fear as parents has been what would happen to our son after we have passed away. We thought we had found a home that we could leave to our son and others with disabilities as a group home after we are no longer here to care for him. However, due to the Connecticut law that could prevent one group home from operating within a thousand feet of another group home, it is likely that our son will not be able to live in our home as a group home if the proposed medical facility across the street is approved as a group home. We have been told that we should consider placing our son on a waiting list for a group home somewhere else in the event we pass away. We've been told that there are very few group homes available for adults with intellectual disabilities and autism, that the waiting list is decades long, and that priority is

given to those who have lost both their elderly parents. So, we are now coming to terms with a heart-wrenching reality that like many other parents with adults with special needs, we will likely die not knowing where our son will live or who will take care of him after we are gone.

The purpose of group homes is to allow disabled residents to live a long, meaningful, and inclusive life in the residential neighborhoods with the support and care of the community. Through years of community outreach and trust, group homes have become accepted and even welcomed into neighborhoods such as ours. However, the group home laws are being highjacked for financial gain in an attempt to obtain approval for the proposed, for-profit medical facility for short-term patients in our residential neighborhood across the street from our home. We fully accept greater access to medical facilities. We have friends who have lost loved ones to substance abuse and mental health issues, and our hearts go out to them. However, the proposed expensive medical facilities would be unaffordable to most who need them. The proposed for-profit medical facility should not be permitted under the guise of group homes. There are so few group homes available for adults with disabilities, and it often takes years to establish a new group home that is accepted into the community. The current attempts to coopt the group homes' laws for financial gain have jeopardized community good will toward group homes at the expense of the most vulnerable members of our society, making it extremely difficult to establish or maintain group homes for those with intellectual disabilities, autism, mental illness, or other life-long disabilities.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Does that conclude your testimony?

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you very much. That does conclude our formal testimony. We would be happy to answer any questions of the Committee, and we're really grateful for the opportunity that you've given us.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you, thank you. And I'll kind of kick us off, and then Senator Anwar has a few questions, and then I'm going to turn it over to Senator Hwang. So, I'm just trying to catch up with this local issue, and I'm reading all types of articles that have been published, and there's a great divide down there in Fairfield with respect to this idea of the Academy or this new facility that they're trying to build down in your area.

I guess just to summarize, this bill or concept would add language to an existing statute 8-3e exempting for-profit medical facilities and facilities required to obtain a certificate of need from the definition of community residence for zoning purposes. So, I guess I would ask a very basic question. Are for-profit facilities that different from nonprofit facilities for zoning purposes?

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): So, no, and let me first address one of your first comments. We're here representing Fairfield because this is a current situation. It's not isolated to the community of Fairfield where, now, in this situation we're in today where the opioid is raging that there are high-money corporations trying to take advantage of our group home laws. For-profit, nonprofit - that

really doesn't matter, but even under today's law, the fact that there is no DMHAS funding, there is no insurance, there is no Medicaid acceptance, it really does already exclude, if you would, Newport Academy from fitting under that. But the law is still gray, and that's why we're trying to really clarify it with this particular Senate Bill 158.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you for that response. What, and if you can't answer it's okay, but your Zoning Board of Appeals, what are their thoughts on this because, you know, I often hear many of my colleagues say, "We want the State to stay out of our business. Stay out of it, stay out of our business, don't come in, don't tell us what to do. We're the experts on this." Share with me what your Zoning Board of Appeals and these folks --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Yep, so let me back up a minute. First of all, when these homes were purchased in January of 2019 under the name of Monroe RE LLC, it was about a few weeks later that then Newport Academy applied for a certificate of need from the Office of Health Strategy. Group homes don't require a certificate of need. But it was a couple months after that, they went to the Town of Fairfield's Building Department and requested permits that had change of use from single-family to our four group homes. When our Building Department heard that of group homes, "of course, you got it, not a problem." Didn't ask a single question. So, it did go before the Zoning Board of Appeals.

I'll tell you I was at that meeting, and I was pretty astounded with the way that the whole thing had gone down, and the Zoning Board of Appeals

upheld the building permit, the decision of the Building Department based on the testimony of the person who issued that particular permit, citing group home law. That is currently being contested in court, and as a matter of fact, our First Selectwoman and our two Selectmen have also sent letters to the Office of Health Strategy, saying that while this issue is being litigated there will be no certificates of occupation issued, and the neighbors actually are involved in that legal issue. They may have more to add, or you may want to hear more.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): No, I appreciate your response. Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your testimony, and thank you for waiting today. I want to just clarify, and I'm going to ask questions. It's more for clarification and does not suggest my position. One of the realities that we have seen in the opioid epidemic is that you need long-term outpatient treatment, and I'm part of the Opioid Working Group as well as, and we've listened to a number of different things that have happened. We know at times our citizens from the State of Connecticut actually are going to other states to get treatment in similar facilities -- Florida being there, North Carolina, and many of the other places. And the idea is that you have to take somebody who is in the environment which has led to the opioid condition in them and then move them out from that environment for a long enough of a time in a residential network which allows them to be able to overcome their addiction and then be back to where they should be and then slowly come back to where

they started from. That's how it works, and it has been successful in a number of different models.

So, I can understand when we have our citizens going to other states, they're citizens from the other states who are coming over here. And opioids impact everybody at all economic levels, so right now, everybody who goes into the industry, they are trying to look at the ones who can pay. So, I can understand the business mindset that some of the people have to try and come to this. And I think what they're doing from what I gather is they're coming into residential areas, and they're for-profit industries which are using or exploiting a law that allows them to get into the communities and then subsequently benefit from the financial gains that there are. Your concern is that these are for-profit companies that are there with a specific purpose. I understand they are paying taxes in the community, though, right?

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Yes, of course, the property taxes would continue to be paid.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): But they are health care facilities, if you will, and not necessarily group homes in some respects, and then your concern is if this continues on, there's going to be a large number of similar people who are going to come in. Now, I know that in order to treat the opioid challenges, you want them to be in residential environment. So, there is going to be a downside to this if we say you no longer can come in, and you only can go into commercial areas. If we send them to the commercial areas, that's not like a house, and you are losing out on the treatment option. And in the State of Connecticut, we already know that we

are having significant problems in the outpatient management of our communities because not everybody can go to another part of the country and live there for six months and get treated. So, we have a problem. And there are going to be some unintended consequences from some of these options, and I'm just putting some of the cards to recognize that there's going to be a downside from what you're doing, but I respect where you're coming from. I have more to say. Do you want to respond? I have more questions, too. Go ahead, please.

TOM MCMANUS: Yes, please, sorry. So, you raise some extremely important points here, and we do need opioid treatment readily available, and that doesn't happen in the rural countryside of residential communities. That happens with an infrastructure that is integrated with the town, that is integrated with the state that is accessible at location. So, the town Board of Selectmen has offered to this specific entity that's looking to operate in Fairfield a mixed use place. Okay? It is easily accessible to the train station, to the downtown area. There are apartment buildings in close proximity. So, the town is -- and the community -- is ready to help and assist in offering treatment plans within the State of Connecticut. But the whole concept is, is that, you know, these are -- it actually serves a better outpatient plan if it's that accessible downtown or in mixed use. But these secluded areas where families have already, such as the example -- have looked to establish long-term life-term solutions for residential use, it's very different than addressing the needs of the opiate addicts.

We fully believe that there needs to be a plan put in place, and one does not rule out the other. So, yes, you know, there do need to be solutions. The town has put forward an option for this company. They've declined because it's not as lucrative as an investment. They can't expand their real estate investment portfolio. Okay, when these larger homes are ten percent, 15 percent decreased in value. There's a full business model behind this that this investment company is looking to operate. So, to the point that you're raising there, the town has looked to make accommodations. The town is absolutely supportive of providing solutions to these addicts, and we want to see that, but there is a difference there, and that's the reason why we need to update this language and really put the silos, the oversight, in the correct buckets.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): So the language -- Go ahead, please.

MEGHAN MCCLOAT: Sorry, I'd just like to comment on that 'cause you did also make important distinction about whether our concern is the fact that they're for-profit or nonprofit. We're not really concerned with the profit model as long as they accept and follow the codified legislation that requires them to receive DMHAS funding. That allows them to be regulated by the State of Connecticut to make sure that they are following empirically evidenced best medical programs and that they are treating people who need it most. You bring up a great point about the fact that there is no doubt there are successful outcomes from these residential secluded programs. But the issue that we're identifying here is that the treatment itself does not have to be given in

the residential area, and we are very fortunate in Connecticut to live in towns where you can drive only five miles between the commercial district and the very secluded residential district.

Treatment models can be based on a group home separated from outpatient treatment that is connected by a shuttle bus. We have wonderful models in our state that already do that, and they are incredibly successful, and they operate to the tune of about 50 percent of the cost of this proposed model from this organization.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): So, let me -- go ahead.

COLLIN BARON: Collin Baron. Further on that point. The whole point here is that OHS, the Office of Health Strategy, issues certificates of need. They issue them to medical facilities that are engaging in material transactions -- hospital mergers, hospitals buying ambulatory surgery centers, establishment of ambulatory surgery centers, purchasing of imaging equipment -- things of that nature, major transactions. The whole concept here is that OHS has said to this group, "You are an entity, a mental health residential living center, and you need a certificate of need." If they need a certificate of need, as night follows day, something's going on in that facility other than housing. It is not just a house. If it were just a house, they wouldn't need a CON. That's the simple explanation of this.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Again, that's going to take me in a different direction, and I have very interesting feelings about the CON process in the State of Connecticut because right now, in our

Opioid Working Group, we actually have people who cannot get treatment CONS for people to invest in our state, and as a result, we have a vacuum in outreach and care. And that's part of our collaborative, coordinated treatment strategy. I just want to understand this and this is for clarification.

There are people who are inpatient in these homes. They are not outpatient, though. There're not people lining up to come in and get care and medications or anything like that. It's actually people residing in these homes. Okay, so it's inpatient treatment centers, okay. So, that's important because if it's outpatient, that changes the game all together. That's a bigger issue for people to driving in and getting treatments and so on. But our inpatient management, that is effective in a different state. If Florida did something like this, we'll have a lot of our citizens coming back here or other states, and we will be figuring out what to do with those people who we'll end up seeing them in the hospitals and other places. So, that's going to be something for us to look at.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): If I could just comment on your line of questioning, also, in terms of a certificate of need for the State of Connecticut which is looking at the need of our population, right? We do have facilities like Silver Hill, like Mountainside that provide high-end treatment. This is even higher level, in terms of cost I'm talking about, not effectiveness of treatment. And I would think that the broader need within our state is not for people who are able to pay out of pocket \$100,000 for an up-to-three-month treatment stay for

a member of their family or for themselves. But it's probably someone who could benefit from having that insurance coverage or state support.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Is there a way that the state could regulate this more rather than through the zoning part?

MEGHAN MCCLOAT: I think that's the million dollar question, right? I think the legislation as it exists, that's before you, it attempts to regulate, to preserve the need, and preserve the access to the zoning protections for those that need it most and to preserve the regulation of the program by requiring that they receive DMHAS funding. By not acknowledging DMHAS funds, and effectually closing the door to any patient that would require funds from the State of Connecticut, they are acknowledging they don't need the State of Connecticut regulation, they don't need to follow the laws, and this doesn't apply to them. They can operate a commercial activity by going underneath the guise that they are serving a protected class. There is no question that the people that they are serving may be members of a protected class. What the major question is, is that the group home provision is supposed to be for residential purposes for those protected classes.

You mentioned that it's inpatient treatment that they're doing. To no doubt, it's less than 90 days. It can be anywhere between 30 to 60 days or 60 to 90 days regarding it's a bill for out-of-network reimbursement. I feel that many people would be very hard-pressed to say that's a residential term; that that's really serving the same needs as an individual with autism spectrum disorder that's

trying to, you know, have a vocation and live in the community and be part of that fabric.

COLLIN BARON: And if you want to talk about accessibility and regulation, the homes we're talking about, this entity Newport is owned by Carlisle Group which is a \$224 billion dollar private equity fund. They're in it to make money, and one of the ways they make money is, and this is important, they don't accept Medicaid, and they are out-of-network with every insurance company except one headquartered in Oregon. When Newport Academy was put up for sale, according to the business records I read, there was a premium placed on it for that very reason. Obviously, revenues are increased if they're not accepting Medicaid and if they're out of network. So, this is all deliberate. I mean, this is to maximize profit; no ifs, ands, or buts. They're going to bring in approximately \$2 million dollars per house per year.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay. That's very helpful. I also want to make sure I clarify this for people and then on your behalf. When somebody looks at a bill like this at a very superficial appearance, they said, "Oh, this is the not in my backyard" crowd again. They want to actually get rid of the group homes, and that's what it is." This is totally different. This is a different conversation altogether, and I know the people who have opposed this privately and publicly are feeling that the reason for this bill is that certain communities do not want group homes, and this is far from the truth. And I think you were very clear in your testimony. I truly appreciate that, and I think we need to repeat that quite a few times so that people

understand what this is about. Because, unfortunately, there are people amongst our communities who do not want the group homes -- thankfully, they are a minority and thankfully they are not heard by all of us.

COLLIN BARON: Excuse me, there are a number of group homes in the town; I'm not sure what the number is. And there's been no ruckus. I mean, they've been accepted. There've been no issues. You know, they've become part of the community. Because they're group homes, not medical treatment facilities.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): And I'll just add that I want to look at this bill from another angle to make sure that unintentionally we do not harm the existing rules for group homes because without those intentions sometimes in the drafting or recommendations, we may end up harming what has been working well. So, I want to look at it from that lens again, but I respect where you're coming from. I understand where you're coming from. I think there's a problem, but I also think there's an opportunity that if people from other states are interested to help the citizens of other states like the people in other states are helping our citizens, maybe we need to actually create a strategy where they may be able to help out, but make sure that there's a balance in who they're serving, and I think that's part of the problem, too, because everybody should have an opportunity to get the treatment and then get better and return to their lives as they would see it. Thank you so much for your answers and your time for the questions. Do you want to say something? With that, Mr. Chair.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank you all for being here, and I want to acknowledge the Chair's accommodations with the unusual setup and the length of time in raising this bill. So, thank you. Let me begin by first saying, as Chairman Anwar stated, this is a national issue, and I think the perception of it being just simply local is just not the case. This is happening all over the country, and I think it's important to note that we are looking to support, and I think what has been made clear by all of you is the fact that substance abuse and mental health needs exist amongst all of us in the community, and we are all in agreement that there is a critical need. And I want to thank Chairman Anwar for his work in the Opioid Task Force. These are important solutions, and we are all very much supportive of that, and I think that's important, too, to correct any misinterpretation or misinformation out there.

I think the other part that I want to address clearly is this. The Chairman shared that this is a health facility, not a home, and I think the Chairman said it, and that's really the crux of what we're talking about. The legal definition that we're looking at in 8-3e, even without the proposed language, is looking at group homes, and I am consistent with the Chair's statement and mission, that this Committee's role is to protect the good intention of group home exemptions from local zoning. And you shared earlier that the Town of Fairfield has demonstrated that, and it's important for people to know that as a public record.

But, for me, if I may, through the Chair on some questions. The legal interpretation of 8-3, even without the proposed changes of Senate Bill 185, would the current applicant that's in question of Newport Academy, qualify under this protection and exemption? If somebody could answer that for me from a legal interpretation; 8-3e without any changes, based upon this model, the application of Newport Academy in the protection that they're looking for from the exemption of local zoning regulations, does it qualify legally?

MEGHAN MCCLOAT: Correct. They do not accept funding from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. That is a requirement that's already codified in the legislative language. With the refusal to accept funding, which would be in the source of Medicaid Husky funding, they would not qualify under this codified language.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And for the purpose of notes in review under the raised bill, it is line 28 to 43 of the current existing language that has not been changed. So, based upon the current interpretation of the statute, it is really important for us as a Committee, without any change at all, the current application as it was presented is not consistent with law as right now, and that's an important point. Could someone also share with me their payment model, the current payment model from the work that you've done from Newport Academy and how that's being portrayed. I think it's really important because I have to be honest with you, the first time I heard the dollar volume that's being charged for patients and families that are looking to do the best in the care that they can provide, I

was stunned by the dollar amounts that were being asked, and talk about their business model in being able to provide critically needed substance and mental health supportive services. Could someone from your group share with me what the current payment model is and also what the current kind of business structure that allows them to kind of --

COLLIN BARON: Well, as I said before, they are out-of-network with every insurance company except one headquartered in the Northwest. So, presumably none of those patients will be coming to Connecticut, nor should they actually because the whole idea of OHS is when they look at need, they look at need in the State of Connecticut. Under our model, we don't deal with our facilities based upon need in New York, New Jersey, or Rhode Island or anywhere else. So, they look at local need. So, they're out-of-network with everybody, and they do not accept Medicaid. So, all they're accepting is commercial insurance, out-of-network, and as a result, they have to deal with the insurance company and negotiate, you know, what copays, what deductibles, and how it's going to work. But, ultimately, it works out to they're collecting through the patient and through the insurance company between \$1100 and \$1300 dollars a day, and if you do the math, it's \$2 million dollars a year.

MEGHAN MCCLOAT: So, every patient with the target program, because they market that their program is for an expected stay between 30 and 90 days, at the maximum length of stay, every patient would exceed \$100,000 dollars just for three months of treatment. They would then be discharged back to their home states.

COLLIN BARON: Let me say one more thing on that model. So, the other thing that happens here is when you have somebody like Newport Academy who can pay high wages, they are getting the affluent, and they are getting the people who are paying full boat. So, every institution in Connecticut, especially when you're dealing with state hospitals, the only way that hospitals can take Medicaid patient is because they pay -- the commercials pay more. So, the cost should be here, Medicaid pays this, the commercials pay this, and it balances. But with groups like this draining the system of the high payers, they're going to be left with the Medicaid, the uninsured, and the underinsured. So, it's going to put a greater strain on the other group homes that are dealing with the entire spectrum of payers.

TOM MCMANUS: This cost that my colleagues here and my neighbors here have cited, these are base costs, right? So, this organization is offering a menu of additional options at extra charge that varies from equine therapy to yoga to any sort of imagination of kind of extra luxurious add-ons that will be charged and increase their profit margins. So, you know, this is not something that the standard resident of Connecticut is going to be jumping in and being able to afford and take part in.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): It's an unusual model, and that's why I asked for all of you to share with the Committee, but I think it's also important to clarify that, as a resident of Fairfield myself, we sometimes have the unfortunate characterization that everybody lives on a "Gold Coast," and that we can afford extravagance in cost, and the reality is it's

a cross-section of economic, socioeconomic parameters. This is a model that defies even the economics that we know down in lower Fairfield County, and that's important. This is a model that is truly international and attracting an exclusive client base, but I think as Mr. Baron mentioned earlier, this is a model that drains the balance, the typical balance of being able to provide critical services that we talked about in the beginning, that we are all unified in.

But I think equally compelling is the real challenge that the medical oversight, the medical protocols in regard to, you know, how they are providing plans, the ancillary costs and services that get built into their system, as I've done some homework on it. That's a unique aspect because it doesn't it doesn't have the oversight of a clinical treatment. They're excluded from that, interestingly. But I also -- I think for me, in talking to so many individuals who have loved ones that are impacted by substance abuse or mental health challenges, their heart goes out. They will do anything to provide services and support in hopes that their loved ones are going to get better. And this is a model that taps into that incredible need, the power of love, unconditional love that people have for their own loved ones, to do anything that they can. But combined with that, without the clinical oversight, that's challenging to me, and that's what this model that you're also challenging, as well, isn't it? And that's so inconsistent, so inconsistent with the group homes that we are so familiar with, that is being used as the exemption to allow these facilities to be established. Would that be correct?

MEGHAN MCCLOAT: I would definitely argue, yes, there's no doubt that, as Collin alluded to, the cost-share model impact on the healthcare status of Connecticut is going to be gravely impacted because there are not going to be enough private payers for this type of treatment to offset the cost for the Medicaid patients, and that is what the entire Opioid Task Force is aimed at trying to bridge that gap. However, at the expense, as you say, of playing on the heartstrings and taking advantage of the most vulnerable people in our communities, whether they be intellectually disabled, whether they're the parents that would sell you their kidney to pay for treatment for their children to have substance abuse treatment, and you're promising them the world, yet you're not guaranteeing the specific type of regulation of services that are backed by vetted programs that we have in the State of Connecticut.

We're very fortunate to live in the part of the country where we do, where we put a ton of funding towards looking at the research. What is the best way to treat people with a substance use disorder? The State of Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services has declared that the ideal treatment is medically assisted treatment. Newport Academy doesn't provide that. They don't mention it once. You can look through their entire website, it's not mentioned once. That is what our state has already declared to be the optimal treatment model. So, it's very confusing how this is being proposed to bridge the gap of need when it's specifically targeting, marketing, and taking advantage of the very vulnerable people in our community, which these group home laws are aiming to protect. It's so

counterintuitive it's frightening, and it's not the first time our state has seen very profit-driven organizations marketing really wonderful things to people that ended up creating the epidemic that we all know we're trying to treat today. This is not the first time something like this has happened in the State of Connecticut.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): It's interesting, and I want to reinforce that this is a national phenomenon, not just a local phenomenon, that you have spoken to many other communities throughout the country, in Virginia, Maryland, throughout the country, that are encountering these kind of exemption bypasses to set up comparable-like clinics. So, I want to be clear for the record that this is not just simply for a town in lower Fairfield County. It is throughout this entire country that this loophole of a federal law is being utilized to develop medical treatment facilities under this business model. Would that be correct?

Well, I want to thank you all for being here, and I think I simply want to close by this. What really turns me in this and being such a strong advocate in this is that it's not a home. I don't care how you slice it, it is not a home, and the intent of the legislation and the exemption protections that historically people may have not wanted group homes in their community, you don't see that here nowadays. And if there are communities, that's the intent of 8-3e, to say that you cannot under local zoning ordinances prohibit group homes, but medical treatment facilities are not a home. That's one. Number two, because of the ratio requirements set up by each town.

And I want to thank you for sharing the touching story of a loving parent that is making every effort to provide for their intellectually or physically disabled children to know that they can be at peace when they pass, that they can set up a group home structure, that they can live independently and live at peace and be fulfilled. That was the theme of Evelyn Kennedy that started over 60 years ago, that they wanted every one of their children to be sure to have a fulfilled life when they're not there to take care of them. And when I hear a story like that, that a facility that is a model that is unsustainable in fixing the problem precludes a family, a parent, to establish a group home in a community because they've taken a spot from them. That, to me, is unacceptable and untenable and why this statute clarification is necessary.

But ultimately, I want to thank all of you for taking your time out of your busy day. This is really why, you know, public hearings and public engagement is so critical. Your taking days and time off of your busy schedule to offer your viewpoint, and I know that word that NIMBY has been used quite a bit, but what I've heard is a different definition of NIMBY. It's "Not in my own backyard" but it's "Now I must get involved" because this is an important point of time where we can get important clarification on this. So, I want to finish by thanking my Chairs for their patience and involvement in raising this bill and having the opportunity for us to give a voice to those individuals that we need to fight for. Thank you.

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

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a couple of followups. I want to drill down a little bit more on some of the definitions that have been tossed around a little bit to make sure I understand them. Before I do that, I want to commend my colleague, the good Senator. I don't think you could have put it any better. This is gut-wrenching to an extent, and I want to make sure I understand it because it's so important.

I'm a little new, but is group home. Is it a colloquial term that encompassed community residence, or is there a difference between group home and community residence under the statute?

COLLIN BARON: They're sort of intermingled. It's not a really clear definition -- clear delineation.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Okay. So, the statutory term is community residence, but colloquially here we refer to is group home, and that's acceptable. Okay. And, again, my colleague touched on this, but I want to make sure I understand it. Do these mental health residential living centers have staff that are paid for or provided by DMHAS?

COLLIN BARON: In this case, no, because they are not accepting Medicaid.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): And, so, and then the definition under the statute, again, as I'm seeing, it says that these community residences, these group homes, must have staff paid for or provided by DMHAS. Correct?

COLLIN BARON: Correct.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): So, again, what you're requesting then is just an overt clarification in

the statute that makes it very overt and clear what the statute actually intends and means. Is that correct?

MEGHAN MCCLOAT: Absolutely. And I think that's an entirely important clarification. Thank you for bringing that up. This does not change the impact of this statute at all. The clarification, although it may seem incredibly specific, doesn't change the application of the statute at all. There are four separate sections that are codified here. One pertaining to community residences with intellectual disabilities; a second pertaining to child care residential facilities that house children with mental or physical disabilities; a third, which is the one we're discussing here, a community residence that houses those who need mental health and substance abuse treatment; and fourth which is hospice care services. By requiring that they distinguish that they are not medical facilities or facilities that require certificate of need, that protects and preserves the intention of group homes in Subsection A because they never needed a certificate of need to operate a group home.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): And I just want to take it one step further because let's say this were to pass. Let's say that the statute read as you're requesting that it read right now. If it read that way, as I'm thinking of and understanding it, nothing would prevent a local zoning authority from allowing this in a residential zone. This would simply give an extra level of oversight to a local zoning authority to regulate something that it might see as a purely commercial interest. Is that correct? So, in other words, Fairfield could just say, if this was passed,

sure, we welcome this into the community in our residential zone. This wouldn't prevent Fairfield or any town from having it in a residential zone. Right?

MEGHAN MCCLOAT: That's actually incorrect because the model as they propose requires a certificate of need. So, therefore, they would not be deemed a community residence because they are performing commercial medical treatment. However, if their model were to change to accept DMHAS funds, the community residence of where they live would not be precluded in any residential zone. Just the treatment where they deliver it, whether it would be in an outpatient building, like I said we live in a wonderful example where it may be two or three miles away to our commercial district. That would be not precluded, and we would have no ability to do that by federal law protections. But, they'd have to change their model to not to not deliver medical treatment in a residential zone without DMHAS funding.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): And obviously changing that model becomes less profitable but would open it up to a significantly larger population of the most needy.

MEGHAN MCCLOAT: Absolutely.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): So, again, now I understand it, and I thank you for the clarification. You know, this is making over what a statute already says. So I understand that. Thank you very much.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Representative Zullo. Representative Dauphinais.

REP. DAUPHINAIS (44TH): Hi, thank you so much for coming today. I have a question specific for the Mom who talked about your son. I, too, have a daughter with special needs. She's now 38. I completely relate to your concern about when you're no longer here, they're needs being met. My question is I'm a little confused about how your son and where he lives in his group home impacts the placement of this facility in that area. Is there a limited amount of facilities that can be in the area? So, for example, if there were six in a zoned area, this would take up number six, and then you wouldn't be allowed? I'm just a little concerned; if you could elaborate on that for me.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): So, just to start on that, for the family to establish a group home out of their existing family house, for their son to be able to continue to stay there and live, right, with other individuals, after they have passed. It is directly across the street from one the facilities -- proposed medical treatment facilities. If that was accepted under group home law, they would be precluded from doing that because it is too close.

REP. DAUPHINAIS (44TH): Oh, I see. So, you would not be able to have that as a group home because it would be too close.

MEGHAN MCCLOAT: There're two specific statutory references to restrictions on quantity in the population as well as actually distance from it. It's actually 19a-507b of the Public Health and Wellbeing Chapter specifically for community residences. No community residence shall be established within 1000 feet of another community residence and they shall not exceed one-tenth of one

percent of population of such municipality. So, she was impacted on two levels because it would be one group home; in this care, they're proposing two, that would be accounted toward the allotment of group homes based on that statutory percentage, and because she's too close to the exact location of the 1000 feet, she would not be able to open a group home as a community residence.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Understood. Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Representative Dauphinais. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): If I may, for the Committee and clarification. This was a letter read from some other family that could not make it to the hearing, and you are just simply reading their submitted testimony. I just want to clarify that on the record. Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Again, thank you so much for being here, and you really have helped us understand this issue in much more depth, and I'm sure the people who are listening right now over here and beyond would understand that, as well. Thank you again.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Senator, thank you. We really appreciate the accommodations that you've made for us, and particularly your thoughtful questions today. We are really grateful. Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you. Moving on now, we are beyond our first hour. If you know, our rules are that we go back and forth between the public signed speakers as well as our agency and elected legislators. So, the first person on our list is

Liza Andrews. Is Liza here? Yes. Thank you for your patience, and thank you for waiting.

LIZA ANDREWS: Good afternoon. I'm Liza Andrews. I'm with the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Our 18-member organization serves nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence annually. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I'm here asking for your support for House Bill 5244. So, this will require landlords to change the locks on individual dwelling units for survivors of domestic and sexual violence when they have a court-issued restraining or protective order. The landlord would have two days to comply with the request and is permitted to charge the actual cost of the lock change back to the tenant, and that includes any fees that they may pay for a professional locksmith. There are additional protections in the bill for both the tenant and the landlord, and the language also addresses offenders who reside in the dwelling unit. So, it makes it clear that the landlord should not give them a key to the new lock and also has no duty under the law to allow them back into the residence, given that there is a court order barring them from the residence.

It's our intent with the proposal to give a meaningful measure of safety and peace of mind to the victim while not making this all really burdensome on landlords and also not requiring the landlord to bear the cost. According to the National Housing Law Project, there are 16 states and Washington, D.C. that do require lock changes for survivors in certain circumstances; so, we're just asking for support here in Connecticut. You do have my written testimony. We do request some

substitute language in line 17. It says two business days; we would like to change that to 48 hours. For survivors who receive a restraining order on a Thursday or Friday, they would have to wait for up to four days to get a lock change.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much, Liza. So, we'll make a note of that 48 hours and then see if we can take that. Thank you again for your efforts in this. I'm so sorry that this had to be brought back. I thought it was such a simple bill, that that should have gone through and then passed, and there were some forces beyond my control that would not let it go through. So, I'm going to continue to fight for this and then hope that people would understand this is a lifesaving measure in some situations.

LIZA ANDREWS: Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you. Representative Dauphinais.

REP. DAUPHINAIS (44TH): Hi, thank you for being here today. I have a question. Does the cost reimbursement to the landlord include labor and the installation -- I mean, and the cost of the lock, do you know?

LIZA ANDREWS: We define actual reasonable costs to include the cost of the lock and then any fee they might pay, I think it says professional locksmith or contractor. So, if they're paying someone to put the lock in, it would include that fee plus the cost of the lock.

REP. DAUPHINAIS (44TH): And then my other question is, is it acceptable for many of the locks we can

purchase today have a code; so, it's just simply changing the code. Is that something that's acceptable because obviously that cost would be much cheaper, and it could be very quick?

LIZA ANDREWS: Yes. If that's how the lock is changed, I mean, I would be open to any language to clarify that. If that's how the lock is changed, so that now the survivor who remains the tenant has access, and the offender, who is barred from the unit, no longer has access, then we're open to how that should be properly worded, absolutely. I don't think the whole mechanism needs to be changed if it's a matter of changing a code.

REP. DAUPHINAIS (44TH): I know more and more people are using those, and they're quite effective, and you can immediately change that code if there's a problem or an intruder or the like, and I'm just wondering. It seems to me like that would be a really good option to include in the bill.

LIZA ANDREWS: Yeah, and it seems like it would keep things simple for the landlord. There's not going to be a cost for them. No cost to anyone.

REP. DAUPHINAIS (44TH): No cost, literally, I mean, you know, probably five minutes for going and changing it.

LIZA ANDREWS: Yeah, we're open to any language.

REP. DAUPHINAIS (44TH): Okay, thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Representative Dauphinais. Good point; we should probably include that in our conversation. Seeing no other questions. Thank you, again, for your time, and thank you for being here. Next person on our list

is Trina Sexton who's director of Reentry Services, Department of Correction. Thank you for your patience, and thank you for being here.

TRINA SEXTON: Good afternoon. My name is Trina Sexton, and I am the director of Reentry Services for the Connecticut Department of Correction. I'm accompanied by Aaron Forest, counselor supervisor in the Reentry Services Unit. I would like to preface this testimony by stating that the director of Reentry Services position is a new position created by Commissioner Cook and his administration in response to the elevated importance of reentry to the state, its communities, and its citizens.

It is with this focus that we would like to thank Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on raised Bill 5242 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE RISK OF HOMELESSNESS FOR THOSE RELEASED FROM THE CUSTODY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION. The Department of Correction is committed to providing programs and services to help prepare individuals for successful reentry. Housing is the foundation to successful reentry; yet, securing stable, safe housing is one of the greatest challenges for some of the men and women returning to the community.

In a review of research conducted on the national level, the connection between incarceration and homelessness is well documented. Those experiencing multiple incarcerations are likely to have higher rates of homelessness. Individuals cycling in and out of the Correctional System are more likely to experience housing instability or homelessness prior to admission. To put some perspective on this, current figures indicate that 770 incarcerated

individuals right now -- that means 536 sentenced and 236 accused -- reported homelessness, marginal housing, or no address upon admission.

It is important to note that housing status is fluid and fluctuates during the time of confinement. As individuals progress towards the end of their sentence, it is not uncommon to see an increase in reports of homelessness for individuals who previously identified housing resources. For this reason, incorporating homelessness screening into the current risk assessment strategy is good practice and aligns with agency objectives pertaining to ongoing classification reviews and reentry planning. Of note, the proposed language of the revised risk assessment strategy in this bill requires the Department of Correction to "screen all offenders to assess their housing needs and homelessness risk and that such assessment shall be used to inform the offenders reentry plan under Section 2 of this act."

While the agency supports the concept, this cannot be done within available appropriations. The Department of Correction recommends the homeless screening apply only to the sentenced population in alignment with most aspects of the risk assessment strategy. The Department of Correction is committed to working with the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness to develop a homeless screening and assessment tool that will likely be incorporated into an existing review process that assesses community resource needs throughout the individual's sentence. This mechanism can be modified to capture risk of homelessness in addition to other pertinent reentry-related needs.

From a technical perspective, some modifications would be necessary to ensure compliance with increased reporting requirements outlined in Section 3. Specifically, existing capabilities to track data would require expansion of the Community Resource Needs Review and Homelessness Screening and Assessment to the electronic format on the DOC Case Management System and Information Screens. Per Section 2 of this bill, this effort focusing on those on discretionary release cannot be done within available appropriations.

Furthermore, in a review of current population data, housing needs differ between the population approved for discretionary release and those who will discharge end of sentence from the correctional facilities. The target population for the Returning Home program appears to refer to the former and excludes individuals who are discharging end of sentence from prison. While those discharging end of sentence from prison may have waived parole or have sentences that are too short for community placement, a significant number of these individuals are denied community release and are at high risk for recidivism. These returning citizens have a higher prevalence of homelessness when compared to the population that reported homelessness, marginal housing, or no address upon intake. As indicated in the below graphic, 26 percent of the population who will discharge end of sentence this year are denied community release and are in need of housing supports. This reiterates an earlier point that as individuals progress towards the end of their sentence, it is not uncommon to see an increase in reports of homelessness are those who previously identified that they had these resources.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Sorry, which graphic; could you --

TRINA SEXTON: In the handout right there.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay. I don't see that in your testimony, but it's okay. Okay, thank you. We can upload it later. Thank you.

AARON FOREST: I'm Aaron Forest, part of the Reentry Services Unit. As outlined in the current discharge planning and reentry process, 2-1-1 calls are often facilitated for the end of sentence population. The below graphs, again this is in the written testimony, of the discharge data, herein referred to as the RTDP, obtained November 2019 through January 2020, depict the number of individuals who released to end of sentence to either homelessness or shelters. Note, the revised RTDP tracking process was implemented in mid-October 2019, so only partial data was available for this month. On the second graph that is included in our written testimony, the gray and blue bars demonstrate a significant need for the end-of-sentence population discharging from correctional facilities. The Department of Correction assists 50 to 60 individuals a month who are discharging to homelessness from our system with 2-1-1 calls for shelter placements and other needs.

The Department of Correction is committed to working with the Committee, the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, and the Department of Housing to improve access to safe, stable housing for the men and women exiting the correctional system. We are happy to answer any questions the Committee may have, and we want to thank you for your time.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your testimony. When you say is there a time that you actually have set up when you start to make the 2-1-1 phone call?

AARON FOREST: Yes, in our written testimony Appendix B, we have outlines; each region has different timeframes that we're able to initiate these calls, and that's all.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): And what are these based off.

TRINA SEXTON: Those criteria given to us by those CANs in those specific regions.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): And this I believe it's based on the time it would take to find safe housing for those individuals.

TRINA SEXTON: So, when the individuals leave incarceration, we do call the CANs in the designated timeframes, but when their appointment for housing comes, it could be one to three days post release, sometimes up to two weeks post release, given some of the feedback we've received from our own staff.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): So, here's my -- in my simplistic mind, it is that if we know somebody's going to be released in six months from now, why are we doing this towards the end, why are we basing it on a certain times? We know at six months, this person is going to be homeless as opposed to somebody else who's going to be homeless because of a certain situation that happens, but this is a very predictable area. And, so, you're doing the risk analysis, which is brilliant, and I'm glad we are moving in that direction, and I want to thank you for that and also CCEH and the Department of Housing

that are working with you on that. But I feel that this could be done early enough so that the risks of homelessness will decrease significantly. I think that's part of the goal.

TRINA SEXTON: And we agree with that. We would like to begin this process earlier, but we have to go with the timeframes that are designated for each region's CANS on when we can call to initiate those services. Reentry for us, we begin -- is when they come in.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): And then would it be reasonable to have a feedback loop so that we make sure that if the discharge is resulting in more homeless people that you start to do it earlier?

TRINA SEXTON: We would support that.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay. And that's internal policy. You don't need to make a law to be able to do that, I would expect. Right?

TRINA SEXTON: Correct.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay. And I recognize the resource situation, that every solution that we come up with in this building, everybody says, "Oh, well, you don't have the resources for it," and that's a reality for some of those situations. The way I look at this is that the cost of homelessness is far more than prevention. Whether it's in the personal toll that individuals have to face or the cost to the Department of Correction in this particular case if they return back or the health care costs that we provide. So, any other language use you'd suggest and language modifications in your testimony? You

did not. Did you suggest any modification in the language in your testimony?

TRINA SEXTON: No, we did not.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay, good. Thank you so much. Any other comments? Seeing none. Thank you much for your patience, and thank you for being here. As you're going back and forth between the public and the agency and the elected legislators, the next person on our list is Jennifer Tirado.

JENNIFER TIRADO: For the record, I'm Jennifer Tirado. So, good afternoon, Senator Anwar, Senator Hwang, and Representative Dauphinais. I'm here to testify regarding H.B. 5245 - AN ACT THAT ALLOWS LANDLORDS TO CHARGE UP TO THREE MONTHS SECURITY DEPOSIT. I strongly oppose this bill, as it would make housing a lot less affordable for the general as well as the vulnerable populations. I'm someone who works full-time and has two jobs, and I could hardly afford that myself.

I'm very concerned about this act because as a recovery counselor, I've met many people coming to the doors of our clubhouse who struggle with acquiring housing, as it is. This includes people of low or fixed incomes, folks with disabilities who already bear the brunt of living with everyday challenges including stigma and discrimination. Allowing landlords to charge their tenants such an astronomical fee as a security deposit would pose a major risk of homelessness for many people. Homeless shelters are at capacity whenever I've called for someone I serve. We already have a mobile homeless epidemic in our country. People cannot recover when they don't know where they are

going to sleep next. I've met many people who live in their cars because affordability is challenging enough as it is.

Giving landlords this opportunity only creates greater hardship for thousands of state residents and may even pull us deeper into an already tragic homeless epidemic. This bill tramples on what I believe is one of our most essential rights as human beings regardless of age. This bill has it so it protects people over the age of 62, but there are many people under the age of 62 that need their housing rights, as well. So, please, say no to H.B. 5245. By opposing this bill, you'll not only be giving people a fair chance at housing but helping put a stop to a housing problem that's harmed many lives and helping those in recovery maintain a roof over their heads. Thank you very much for listening to my testimony today.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for being here, thank you for waiting, and thank you for taking the time. I know, Jennifer, in order to be here, you had to make some sacrifices, and I know that you're not only doing this for yourself but a lot of other people who could be negatively impacted by some of these policies. So, I hear you, I recognize this, and I'm so appreciative of your time. Thank you, thank you for your testimony.

JENNIFER TIRADO: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Yes, Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mister Chair. I just want to thank you for your testimony and for your work as a counselor. I just wonder, for the record, did you submit testimony?

JENNIFER TIRADO: I did submit testimony.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Okay. We just don't have it on file yet, but I'll be on the lookout for it. Thank you very much for your time.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you. Thank you so much. Next, we move on Nandini Natarajan, who is the chief executive officer for CHFA. Welcome. How do you like our winter here?

NANDINI NATARAJAN: I'm used to it. I came from Chicago. [Laughter]

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Yes, it's mild, right?

NANDINI NATARAJAN: Good afternoon, Senator Anwar, Senator Hwang, and members of the Housing Committee. I'm Nandini Natarajan, the CEO and Executive Director -- and Representative Zullo, as well -- CEO and Executive Director of the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority. I'm here to speak in support of raised Bill 5243 entitled AN ACT CONCERNING BONDS OF BOARD MEMBERS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES OF THE CONNECTICUT HOUSING FINANCE AUTHORITY. First of all, thank you very much for raising this bill for a public hearing.

CHFA was created in 1969 by the State legislature to help alleviate the shortage of affordable housing for low and moderate-income families and persons in Connecticut. It is a quasi-public authority that issues its own federally tax-exempt mortgage revenue bonds to fulfill this statutory mission. The proceeds from our bonds are, in turn, used to finance affordable mortgages for low and moderate-income, first-time homebuyers, and to fund the

construction, renovation, and extended affordability of rental apartments.

This legislation allows CHFA to obtain insurance covering board members, the executive director, and employees in lieu of executing a surety bond as required by existing law. The insurance must be equivalent to the surety bond and be conditioned on the faithful performance of duties, issued by an insurer authorized to transact business in Connecticut, and paid for by CHFA. CHFA's insurance broker has advised that an insurance policy offers broader coverage than a surety bond and would not require CHFA to reimburse the insurer except for payment of the deductible.

This differs from a surety bond which, although it indemnifies, seeks recourse from the bond holder for amounts that the surety pays out. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I'm happy to answer any questions.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your testimony, and these people who are serving on the board, they are volunteers?

NANDINI NATARAJAN: That's right.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): All right. This makes perfect sense to have them protected. Thank you so much. Any other questions, comments? Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you for appearing and thank you for the good work of your quasi-public. This was a bill that was proposed last year, correct?

NANDINI NATARAJAN: That is a really good question. I'm going to turn to Peg Fitzgerald sitting over there.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Which leads to the answer to the question. Thank you, and I just wanted to formally recognize Peg, if we could for the record.

PEG FITZGERALD: Peg Fitzgerald, Connecticut Housing Finance Authority.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you. I just wanted to acknowledge. I know Peg has done incredible years of service in her work. I want to just take a moment to recognize and thank her for her work. But I think it's important for the Committee and for us to understand that other quasi-publics have undertaken this kind of initiative to take the burden off of the surety bond extra costs and to do that for their various board members, and that's why I believe last year we did do legislation related to other quasi-publics and this would be consistent with what's happening in the other quasi-publics. Thank you. Thank you, Mister Chair.

NANDINI NATARAJAN: Thank you very much.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you. Seeing no other comments, thank you so much for your time. Thank you and welcome. And next on our list is Rafie Podolsky. Thank you for your patience, Rafie, and thank you for being here.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Thank you very much, Senator Anwar, Senator Hwang, members of the Housing Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you. I've submitted a written testimony on three bills, and I'll try to run through them quickly. The first is

House Bill 5245 which you've heard testimony on from others in regard to allowing for a three-month security deposit for landlords. We think this is, for numerous reasons, not a good idea at all. First of all, it's quite unrealistic. If you look at the dollar amounts of money you're talking about, these are renters, the people who may not be -- you're looking at numbers that are like bouts of the rents. The existing statute has a two-month maximum for a security deposit plus you can require the first month's rent, so that's really three months. If your rent is \$1500 dollars, that's over \$4000. If the rent's \$2000 dollars, that's over \$6000 dollars. It's a lot of money to be able to get an apartment. It really excludes people.

And actually if you think about what happens at the end of a tenancy, a landlord has 30 days to return the deposit, but when you move, you need to move into another apartment. So, if everybody starts going for two or three months, now you're looking at thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars. Connecticut at two months is actually high compared to our neighbor states. Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, and New Hampshire all have a one-month maximum. There are actually more states with a one-month maximum than with a two-month maximum.

But the other thing that for me is most important is it creates a situation that invites discrimination, and this is really important. Because if you think about it, that if you're a landlord and you set a very, very high security deposit -- it's even a problem with two months, but if you go higher, nobody's going to be able to pay it, or very few people. Why would you hurt your own business by

setting the security deposit so high? Well, the answer is if you get a tenant that you like, you lower the security deposit. If somebody comes in and says I'd like the apartment, but I can't do more than a month. You want them, you say, "Sure, fine." If you don't want them for whatever reasons, you say, "Hey, I need three months." And that becomes a backup way of undercutting state antidiscrimination policy because you've essentially covered up the discrimination by turning it into a large discretionary amount. You actually cut people from some programs out. You can't discriminate because someone's on Section 8, but nobody on Section 8 is going to have access to more than a two-month security deposit, tops. So, I hope -- this bill's come up a number of times in the past. The legislature's always rejected it.

Now, let me just quickly then say something on these other things. House Bill 5244, dealing with changing locks. I endorse the testimony you've already heard from Liza Andrews. House Bill 5241, which deals with certificates of occupancy. That's a bill designed to improve code enforcement. I've used up my time. I'd be very happy to answer questions. I know there's a fair amount of landlord opposition, and I would welcome the opportunity to explain why I think this is a reasonable proposal. Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Rafie, for your work and your commitment to helping people and then your testimony. Could you tell me what your thoughts are on 5241, please?

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Sure, and I'll try and be brief on this. Bill 5241 deals with a fairly narrow category

of code enforcement ordinances, and those are ones that are designed -- there's a statute that says towns are allowed, if they wish, to have an ordinance that requires code inspections at the time of vacancy; in other words, between tenancies. And that's what 47a-57 does, and that's what it deals with. It's designed to prevent blight by saying when you have a switch in tenancies you need to bring the apartment up to code or back up to code. It happens to be easier if the unit's vacant, to be doing an inspection. It's easier to schedule; it's easier to see it.

But there's a catch, and the catch is the landlord has to call because the town has no way to know when there's a vacancy of an apartment. So, that's always been the key to this. We used to have a provision in here that said since you're not supposed to even be renting it without getting an inspection, you can't collect rent. That provision had a lot of power to get people to make the phone call for the inspection. That was repealed a number of years ago -- that sentence; the rest of the statute's there.

What this bill does is it essentially says that it restores that concept, but it puts it in in a little different way because the real issue is not necessarily getting the certificate but getting the phone call. Sometimes, for example, it may take a long time to get the city out to look at the apartment, and landlords complained about that. The wording of Section 2 of the bill here is designed to say that what you really can't do is you can't be collecting rent on a new tenancy without telling the city that you have a vacancy. And it may be that to

make that clear, the bill could benefit with some rewording, but that's really the concept behind it. If you never get the certificate, then you may have to give some money back, but the assumption here is you're going to get the certificate -- if you're complying with the law, you'll will eventually get the certificate either 'cause you passed the first time or you fix whatever is wrong and bring it up and then passed.

So, while it's designed to get a preoccupancy inspection, it's also designed to recognize that there may be times when it's reasonable for the landlord not to wait, as long as they have told the city. Then it becomes a slowness on the part of the city. Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much. Does anybody have any comments or questions? Seeing none. Oh, Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (48TH): Thank you, Mister Chairman. Good afternoon. This bill you were just testifying about, the certificate of occupancy, as I'm reading through the language, it does seem like there would be an escrow setup until the time that the landlord were able to get a CAO. Is that how you understand the bill.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Yeah, the way the bill's written, that's what it would provide, and that was actually in the old version of the bill. That was part of what was -- yes, that's what it what provide. There're certainly other ways to write that. The trick was to make sure that the money would be available if the landlord never got the certificate at all.

REP. SMITH (48TH): Right, in that situation, then the money goes back to the tenant. There's no use and occupancy fee due by the tenant.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: If the landlord fails to get a certificate of occupancy even after an inspection and, for example, fails to comply with any orders for inspection, then, yes, at some point that would be the case. But otherwise, that money's going to be for -- that will be the landlord's money.

REP. SMITH (48TH): So, what happens in a situation where the tenant moves in, pays the landlord for his eight months, and then stops paying? The landlord goes to evict, and then the tenant raises as a defense, well the landlord never had the CAO; I, therefore, am not obligated to pay any rent. The landlord's obligated to repay the eight months' rent that I already paid. Is that the situation?

RAFIE PODOLSKY: At that point, I would think the landlord would apply for the CAO. If you're saying the landlord would not have asked for the money, that's true. The landlord would not have asked for the money under that circumstance.

REP. SMITH (48TH): Well, the landlord's already received and spent the money, I would assume. So, I'm just wondering. So, is that an absolute defense? So, if a tenant is being evicted and they're going to court, and the tenant then says -- realizes, well, based on this statute, you did not have a CAO at the time I rented. You still don't have a CAO. I, therefore, am not obligated to pay any rent. Is the landlord then in a position where he or she is unable to evict the tenant based on that?

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Under the prior statute, if you did not have a CAO, you would evict the tenant for lapse of time; you would not evict the tenant for nonpayment. And that was, I think, a common practice for landlords who had evaded the existing CAO ordinances, what they would do is they -- in fact, what you would see sometimes is you would see a nonpayment count and a lapse-of-time count in the eviction, and that was the way of the landlords trying to protect themselves if that became -- if that were to become an issue. But one of the consequences was once the word was out that you need to get the CAO, that actually affected landlord behavior, and that's one of the ways which then was beneficial for the city because that meant that the city was in a position to do the kind of enforcement it was trying to do. The real goal here is to keep the apartment maintained properly; that's the real goal.

REP. SMITH (48TH): No, I understand the goal. Having represented both landlords and tenants in Housing Court on a number of occasions, I'm wondering how this bill as proposed -- so, if the landlord were to, as you indicated, bring a two-count complaint, one for nonpayment of rent and one for lapse of time, under this new bill, would the lapse of time statute still allow the landlord to proceed with the eviction.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: I would think so, yes. I think so. It wouldn't change -- whatever the law was at the time that the no-rent provision was in the statute, it would be the same, and I'm pretty sure that that was the way it was handled by landlord attorneys.

REP. SMITH (48TH): It was known as -- under the current law, the towns had the option to say we're going to inspect each time there's a transition from one tenant to the other?

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Under that statute, the town -- it's got to be by ordinance. In other words, the town had the option of creating the ordinance. I don't know exactly how many towns have such an ordinance. My guess is it's not a large number, maybe a dozen or so; I'm not sure. It's hard to verify that because there's no -- I went on-line last night, I googled trying to see if I could identify the towns, and I immediately identified Hartford and, I believe, Winsted, but I could not figure out how to run a search to find out what the other towns are. So, I don't know the exact number. I know that years ago there were somewhere around 15 or 20, perhaps fewer now; I don't know.

REP. SMITH (48TH): Yeah, I would suspect -- and I know with the town I represent, one of the towns I represent, New Fairfield, does not have such an ordinance. So, in that situation where the town does not have an ordinance, there's no requirement for an inspection, obviously. And under this bill, if it's passed, it would then become an automatic requirement for the inspection on notification?

RAFIE PODOLSKY: You mean for towns that already have an ordinance?

REP. SMITH (48TH): Well, let's assume the town does not have an ordinance, and this bill becomes law. How is the process changed?

RAFIE PODOLSKY: If the town -- Section 2 does not apply unless the town has an ordinance. It's an

enabling act, and I think the understanding has been with these kind of sort of detailed enabling acts, that if the town wants to use that authority as an enabling act, it has to follow what the statute says. But if it doesn't -- it's voluntary on the town; they don't have to do it. I don't think it's preemptive. That's to say, a town could have a different kind of inspection ordinance. It doesn't -- this is not the only way a town can do code enforcement. It is part of the toolkit.

REP. SMITH (48TH): So, we had some testimony at the Judiciary Public Hearing -- it's been a long week already -- I think it was earlier this week, in which we had somebody from the City of Bridgeport come to testify on behalf of a bill that required the town to go out and inspect for fire code violations to make sure there's sprinklers and smoke detectors in various units. And basically for a city like Bridgeport, which I don't represent, but for a city like Bridgeport or the larger cities, this individual said it's nearly impossible for them to go out to every complex and every apartment unit to look to see whether or not it's code-compliant. And I would suspect that also would be troublesome here, for them to go out and inspect all these various units even if they were asked to do so. So, if I'm a landlord and I say, listen, my tenant just left, I have a new tenant, and I need you to come in and check this out and give me the updated CAO. I'm not sure how realistically that's going to work if they don't have the manpower to do it.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: Well, I think that -- I believe that for the fire safety code -- I think the complaint that Bridgeport was making has to do with

the fact that the state fire safety code is a state mandate. I think there's something in the state statute that says the fire marshall is supposed to go out and make inspections on a periodic basis. Maybe it's a year; I'm not sure. Here you're talking about an optional authority to municipalities to adopt an ordinance that matches the statute. So, presumably, a municipality that felt it didn't have the resources to enforce the ordinance -- I have to assume they wouldn't adopt the ordinance. Or if they had one, I guess they would repeal it. So, unlike the fire safety situation that you're talking about, I think this is within the control of the municipality. They don't have to do it if they don't want to.

REP. SMITH (48TH): That's fair enough.

RAFIE PODOLSKY: But it's a tool. It works as part of a toolkit. They call them toolkit in code enforcement for those municipalities that do want to do it.

REP. SMITH (48TH): Understood. All right, thank you.

REP. ARORA (151ST): Thank you, Representative Smith. Seeing no other comments, thank you Rafie. And next on our list is Mayor Justin Elicker of the City of New Haven. Thank you, Mayor Elicker, and thank you for your patience.

MAYOR ELICKER: Good afternoon. Thank you for having me. My name is Justin Elicker, and I'm the mayor of the City of New Haven. I'm joined today by a number of our city staff and also Alder Evette Hamilton from New Haven submitted testimony to the Committee. I'm here today to speak in support of

S.B. 184, S.B. 187, and H.B. 5242, and in opposition to H.B. 5245. The first several bills take important steps to addressing the different challenges both in the development of housing and in the prevention of homelessness, while 5245 seeks to further prevent residents from accessing housing. I also want to applaud Senator Anwar on his right-to-housing legislation. Connecticut needs bold action to address our affordable housing crisis, and I appreciate that leadership.

Housing is the center of economic stability and social well-being. Quality, affordable, stable housing produces better health outcomes, better education outcomes in children, safer neighborhoods, and greater economic mobility.

Despite housing's central role in our lives, Connecticut is falling behind in ensuring access to housing for our residents. In our state, it would take over 100 hours per week working at minimum wage to afford a standard market-rate apartment. Roughly a quarter of households in our state spend more than 50 percent of their income on the cost of housing. New Haveners struggle with skyrocketing housing prices and wages that can't keep up. The affordable housing that is available at times is inadequately maintained and concentrated in small segregated neighborhoods. While we drive down the cost of market-rate housing by incentivizing new construction both in our cities and surrounding towns, there is much more that we can do.

I grew up in New Canaan. My folks still live there, and a large proportion of New Canaan's housing has a zoning code minimum of four acres per construction of single-family residences. The majority of the

housing is not permitted on less than two acres. In fact, only this -- and if I may, Mister Chair -- this tiny portion outlined in black here on this map would allow for multifamily development. This tiny portion of the town that I grew up in allows for multifamily affordable developments. New Haven, on the other hand, as you can see, the black marker highlights the whole city. Because there is no place in New Haven where we prevent affordable housing, every neighborhood in New Haven allows for multifamily development. Every neighborhood in New Haven has affordable housing.

This is a challenging issue, but we all have to do our part to address it. This is an issue that we must focus on because it's a racial and social justice issue of our time, and communities like New Haven bear the undue burden of providing housing when many suburban communities including the town I grew up in should be doing much more. New Haven is doing a lot of work in this area, but we can do more. And in New Haven, I want to highlight one proposal that we are in New Haven advocating for that would create a regional affordable housing trust fund to stimulate the development of affordable housing projects in a larger geographic region.

As towns continue to resist affordable housing, this is a step towards bridging the gap and providing an incentive to develop affordable housing stock. Our proposal is that a small surcharge be added to building permit fees, and that charge would help support the creation of these regional housing funds to subsidize affordable housing. The proposal incentivizes, it has a dedicated funding stream,

and, so, it's much easier and more practical to pass in the short term. I think that there are many bolder proposals which we also support, but we're also looking for incremental incentivizing mechanisms to support not only affordable housing growth in New Haven but in our surrounding suburbs.

In the long term, we must pursue a comprehensive housing policy, and the Right to Housing legislation hopes to achieve just that. I just wanted to add one final note. We support the rental unit safety legislation, H.B. 5123 to provide municipalities with the tools to ensure that our existing housing stock is safe and of high quality. Members of our staff will provide more extensive testimony about that.

I'm grateful for your commitment. These are long days for you all, I'm sure, and I appreciate the work that you're doing.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much, Mister Mayor. I appreciate your coming in, and I appreciate your support of so many of our bills. I just wanted to speak to you about S.B. 184, and the idea about this is that -- and we are hoping to be able to collaborate with our Department of Housing as to try and identify ways of getting support of the federal tax incentive that has been created with the Federal Government and then combine it with the State and the towns and the cities, in your case, to look at the existing opportunity zones to see if there is revitalizing opportunity or having new developments. But also making sure that new developments are green, if you will, and also giving opportunity to the workforce that is employed by the

municipality or the city. So, how do you think that would help New Haven in that situation?

MAYOR ELICKER: This proposal combines three areas that cities like New Haven are in deep need of. First of all, New Haven has a number of opportunity zones, and while we've had some investment, I think that the amount of investment has been lower than anyone anticipated, and, so, finding created ways to attract more investment to help economic development in the city is vital.

Second, unlike ten years ago, affordable housing in New Haven is something that's brought up on every other door that I knock on when I'm going door-to-door around the city. And that's because there are many, many more market-rate units. That's because our rental vacancy rate is very, very low, and people don't have the opportunities that they need to find safe, affordable housing. And, so this would help on that front.

And, third is on workforce development. There are increasing job opportunities in New Haven, but a lot of them are around the real estate, restaurant, and retail industry, and they're not good solid jobs that lead to a career. They're not jobs that have solid benefits. And, so our interest is in creating many more opportunities for people to develop the skills that they need and the supporting infrastructure including housing to allow them to access the growing opportunities in, for example, neuroscience and medical sector, in construction and in other jobs that have much more opportunity for benefits and a solid, long-term career. Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your comments, and thank you for being here. Anyone else has any questions? Thank you, and thank you for your testimony.

MAYOR ELICKER: Thank you so much.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Moving to our next speaker from the public, is Aicha Woods. Thank you, Ms. Woods for being here, and thank you for your patience, and thank you for waiting for us.

AICHA WOODS: Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak. My name is Aicha Woods, and I am Executive Director of City Plan for the City of New Haven. So, I will just keep my remarks brief, and my support is very much aligned with Mayor Elicker's with the bills that Mayor Elicker specifically called out. But, I just wanted to speak briefly from a planning and land use perspective because I think the affordable housing crisis that we're experiencing, really many solutions are in land use and in zoning, and we've heard a lot about zoning today.

So, New Haven, as the Mayor pointed out, is experiencing a vibrant period of growth, and it's rich with culture, talent, job opportunities, but also we're at a point where we're at risk of leaving many of our residents behind because they don't have access to housing that enables them to take advantage of those opportunities. Job growth and housing are interconnected, and over the past decades, there's been a gap between them. While job growth has increased, the production of housing has not kept up with it, and that's not unique to New Haven. Around the country, the highest rates of

economic growth are in walkable dense urban areas, but without the preservation of existing affordable housing, as well as significant increases in housing production, our neighborhoods are feeling the pressure of rising rents and property taxes, and residents are very anxious about displacement.

So as the gravitational pull of urban centers increases, we simply need more good quality and affordable, especially workforce, housing that is adjacent to transit and is in mixed-use neighborhoods where people can live and work in the same place. From a planning perspective, I just wanted to highlight a few focus areas. One is transit-oriented development. This is so important that people are able to access their work in a reasonable timeframe. A long commute has a much higher burden on low-wage earners, and, so, co-locating housing and work is really important, and also transit opportunities are incredibly important, especially for lower-wage earners.

The second focus is on sustainability and resiliency. We know that the footprint of low-density, car-dependent patterns of development are not sustainable long-term, and we also know that high-density, transit-rich developments are our best bet to meet goals of reducing carbon emissions and mitigating climate change. Again, any discussion of climate strategy should foreground equity, housing security, and access to jobs; so, we are supporting resilience and well-being for all, and I appreciate that S.B. 184 seems to capture all of those concerns.

And, finally, from a zoning perspective, there is tremendous opportunity to increase production of

affordable housing through updating our exclusionary 20th century zoning laws. These include, for example, considerations of inclusionary zoning which New Haven is looking at and will put forward a policy on, and that could include density bonuses and FAR bonuses for developers. The other options could include eliminating parking minimums, allowing accessory dwelling units, reconsidering single-family zoning, and also going to form-based zoning that allows for higher-density mixed use. And all of these zoning tools have been demonstrated to show a dramatic benefit for affordable housing without a lot of additional investment, just by allowing [Crosstalk].

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Ms. Woods. Do you want to wrap up?

AICHA WOODS: Yep, so, just as cities and regions and states around the country are faced with similar challenges of inequities in housing affordability, I think a statewide and regional collaborative planning effort, as the Mayor alluded to, will -- we can work towards, you know, solving many of the issue raised by the bill that you are looking at today.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your testimony. Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you so much. Next is Senator Rob Sampson. Senator Sampson, sorry you had to wait for a bit, and thank you for your patience.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): Good afternoon, Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, Representative Zullo, and I guess Tony's out of the room, but I offer him my respect, as well. I'm here to testify on House

Bill 5245, which is the bill that would change the maximum security deposit to three months. I'm testifying on this bill just because it's similar to a letter that I had sent you guys requesting to have another bill raised which would eliminate the requirements on full security deposits and prepayment of rent. Essentially, I don't believe that the government should be in any position to dictate to either a landlord or a tenant what the terms of their lease agreement should be, period, because it's a private contract, and the government really has no interest in it.

But the reason why I'm here is a bigger issue than that, is that I believe the current law, while it might be well-intended, I think people put that two-month requirement in there because they believe that it would help potential tenants to be able to afford rents. Well, rents and security deposits are determined by market forces, and even though the limit is two months across our state, if you look at low-income rents, you know, in the major cities, in particular, and across Connecticut, many of them only charge one month because that's all they can. So, eliminating this requirement or increasing it to three months, like this bill, I don't think is going to have an effect on the market forces, but what it will do is allow special circumstances to occur. And let me just explain what I mean.

I think the reaction from some people who are opposed to this legislation is that "Oh my God, the moment we do this, landlords are going to start charging three, four, five, or six months, and they're going to use that as a tool to restrict access to housing." And, in fact, I think the

current law restricts access to housing because many people that approach a landlord and apply for a housing unit that might have bad credit, or they have an eviction in their history, the problem that they have is that they are limited by the current law, and the landlord is limited by the current law to only accepting a maximum of two months' security deposit.

I'm a landlord myself, and while I haven't been in this situation myself, I know a lot of other people who have, and, unfortunately, the landlord's got no choice. They'll say, "Look, I've got bad, you know, bad credit, but, you know, I can afford to pay you, and I'll be a good tenant," and sometimes you're like, "Well, you know, the maximum I can charge you is two months, and, as a result, I've gotta deny the application." And then they come back, and they say, "Well, I can pay you six months in advance." And while sometimes the landlord might agree to those terms, that they feel a little more confident that they will have a little more, you know, skin in the game and more likely that that tenant's going to be a good tenant going forward, but our current law restricts that from happening. And I think that's unfortunate, and I know that this exact situation happens pretty often.

So, I would encourage you to modify the bill that's before us to remove all those requirements. Let the market determine how much rent should be and how much security deposit there should be in each transaction. You know, we're talking about the citizens of our state. They're grownups, both the landlords and the tenants, and I believe they should be able to negotiate for themselves.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your testimony. Thank you for waiting. Anybody have any questions? Representative Gonzalez.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Thank you, and I'm sorry that I came in late, but I heard what you just said at the end that they should modify the bill and allow the landlord and the tenant agreeing, you know. And I will that I would like that in a perfect world, but we don't live in a perfect world.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): You're right, Representative. We don't live in a perfect world, and that's because we have laws like this.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Yes, but the thing is that all also -- we also got laws that will protect the people that didn't know how to defend themselves and people that have rights, but they don't fight for it sometimes. Now, and I will say that in my community, I get a lot of calls, and one of the things that people -- most of the time, they are looking for an apartment -- is that they ask, "Is that legal that the landlord asked me for two months' security deposit." Now I do understand that the security deposit is very important because if you destroy the apartment, they can't use that for rent, but if you destroy the apartment, the landlord will use that money to fix the apartment. I know sometimes maybe it's not enough, but that's the purpose of the security deposit.

But we have a lot of people that are struggling right now. They live on a fixed income, and people that are looking for an apartment, and if we allowed the landlord to decide how many months' security deposit, it's going to be terrible because if you

decide, well, you know, I have to rent this apartment, but I want four, five, whatever security deposit you want, and if the person lives on a fixed income and that person is struggling, and this is a good person that needs an apartment, then you're going to make it impossible for that person to rent. And if we allow all the landlords to do that, you imagine it's going to be hard to all persons that live on a fixed income to find an apartment.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): I don't know if there was a question or not in there, Representative, and I'm not here to debate you, although I'd be delighted to debate you on this subject because I have a great deal of personal experience. We've got to decide what kind of world we want to live in. I think the circumstances that you've expressed are not accurate. Listen to me. A lease agreement is not a one-sided agreement. It's not that the law would allow a landlord to charge whatever they want.

Landlords are subject to market forces, you know, and so are tenants. And even though the limit today is two months, if you go look at the rentals that are available across our state, you're going to find that there are many rentals available that are much less than two months. And that is because landlords are having to compete in the marketplace, and there're a lot of low-income applicants that can only afford one month, and they are catered to by the industry who wants their business. That's how a free-market economy works. That's how America works. And when we decide as a state government that we are going to tell either party in that transaction that they have limited rights, that's

not our job. Our job is to represent them and protect their rights.

If you do what I'm asking and you take these terms out of the law and you are essentially allowing freedom, you're allowing the tenant and the landlord to decide for themselves what they want as far as a transaction. And both sides have to agree, and the landlord can't just say "I want six months." If the tenant can't afford six months, they'll offer him one, and somehow, somehow, the market will fix that. That's what this country great.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Okay, now you said that you're not here to debate me. That's fine. I'm not here to debate you either, but I can tell you -- I'm landlord also -- and I can tell you that I don't need that, I don't need a piece of paper to agree with my tenant. I don't because if I know that somebody applies, and I do a background check, or even if I know the person and I agree with that person, okay, it's going to be like I have done in the past. I said, "Okay, one month's rent and then the rest. If you can't pay the second month, you can pay like little by little every month until you catch up the second month." So, those are things that we do on our own, that we don't have to go by the paper. It's like you're a new mother; you don't need information and orders and whatever for you to raise a child. So there's the same thing.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): I believe you're making my point, though, Representative.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): No, no. My point here is this. We can't allow, and I'm a landlord, we can't allow the landlord to decide, "Well, instead of two

months it's going to be four months." Me, as a landlord, I can agree and disagree with the tenant. I can agree and say, "Let's go by this," and I've been [inaudible-02:33:46], why are we going to need to change that so we can, you know, be able to agree with the tenant?

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): Do you disagree with me that there are voluntary transactions that are not occurring between landlords and tenants because of the current law? Because I can tell you there are. There are perfectly willing tenants and perfectly willing landlords who want to make a transaction, and they cannot because this law prohibits their freedom to do so. I see that as wrong and anti-American.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): I will say that as long as, like I said before, a two months' security deposit, you can pay one and then little-by-little you can pay the other one. That's not in the law, but you said two months. I'm not going against the law. I'm saying, "Yes, two months," but I'm giving them time. So, that's an agreement that we go with the tenant, and I think that it's something that -- you know, when you see 2020, and you say, "Well, things are great." Let's talk about Hartford here. Hartford's got money, you know. It's a rich city, when in reality, we got people that are struggling, and we can't allow --

Let's say this. Let's say we have the good landlords, like always. Okay. The good and the bad. Now, if we go with the good and say, "Okay, we can agree with this one because he's a reasonable person." What about the bad ones that really don't

care about laws, and they will do whatever they want? That's the problem.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): Again, I don't know if there was a question in there.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): It's not to debate each other, but I think that you have your opinion and I have mine. But I think that --

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): My opinion is in keeping with creating the most opportunities for people who live in our state and not restricting their rights, whether they're tenants or landlords. That is my opinion. My job as a state senator is to represent my constituents, and that means that I do not vote for legislation that would prohibit them from doing free acts that are harming anyone else. And entering into a lease agreement that they are fine with whether they are on either side of the transaction is something that I feel I have an obligation to do. And for me to tell someone, "No, you cannot enter into a lease agreement, a private contract between adult citizens because we don't like it up here" is ridiculous, and we should undo that law because it is anti-freedom, and I'll tell you one other thing about it, Representative. It also eliminates opportunities for people, not just in the immediate circumstance, but the best way to provide housing opportunities is to create a competitive housing market that both landlords and tenants want to operate in. And when you have laws like this you're telling landlords, "Don't bother because you cannot operate profitably in this state." And that's bad news because that limits housing opportunities for everyone.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Maybe good landlords, they will say two months, that's fine, that's okay. But maybe the other ones, they are not looking to do that; maybe they'll say I want this open so I can decide whatever, you know, I want to charge. Well, I think that we can keep open and maybe about this issue. I think that I have -- maybe you have -- I know that you have a different opinion than mine but --

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): But my opinion is simply that we should allow our citizens to enter into contracts freely.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): And my opinion is that we should protect people that really need.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): Well, we have a system of justice for that purpose, Representative, and if someone mistreats someone or violates a law or discriminates against someone, we have a way to do that. I'm only trying to allow a situation where both parties -- you know a lease agreement signed by both parties. It is not just the landlord charges whatever they want. The tenant has to agree to those terms, and if the landlord's not offering something at a competitive market rate, he's just not going to rent it. That's the way it works.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): And if I'm a tenant, and I'm desperate and I need an apartment, I will sign something that maybe later on I would regret it. I think we can't just avoid that kind of problem. Thank you. Thank you very much.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Representative Gonzalez, and thank you Senator Sampson. Fascinating conversation, but I think sometimes we

live the experience that we live, and then it's important to -- one of the things that I say is that empathy is trying to understand somebody else's perspective, and I think the more conversations we have, the better it is, but, with that, I think Representative Zullo, and then we'll have a closing conversation about this testimony with Representative McGee.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): Thank you very much. You know, I want to concede that I tend to agree that the free market will generally dictate market and rental conditions, but I empathize with Representative Gonzalez that I think we also have to take into account that in some cases, we can't assume people enter these transactions with the same bargaining positions for a variety of reasons. And I think that's the case in all things in life. I see that as an attorney. People enter into contracts and negotiations from a different bargaining position. So, I can appreciate that perspective.

By the same token, I also appreciate the perspective that when you go to buy a house, if you don't have good credit, you're charged the higher interest rate or you are charged PMI, or you're required to put down a larger down payment. And I see those as analogies to what you're talking about. I understand both sides. I'd be interested to learn more about it. My question is simple -- Would allowing three months' security deposit increase housing opportunities or decrease housing opportunities? And I don't know that question as I sit here. Maybe -- I'm confident you have an opinion on what it would do, and would I be correct to guess that you feel it would increase housing

opportunities by extending rentals to a greater subset of the population that maybe can't get rental right now?

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): I believe that some people who have bad credit who cannot find a rental because landlords will not accept them with only two months' security deposit or two months' prepayment of rent, might be willing to if they had three months because they would feel more secure in that situation. And less people would be turned away. I also just want make a comment about your first point which is that you're absolutely right, that when people enter into that leasing transaction, they are unequal except it is the landlord that is at the disadvantage. The landlord has to follow far more rules and guidelines and laws regarding the antidiscrimination that we have to protect the tenant already, but at the end of the day, it's a free act of both parties to sign their name to that agreement, and when we are stopping free acts from happening because they don't meet our requirements, we're infringing on the rights and freedoms of our citizens, and we're creating less rental opportunities. There's no other way to look at it.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): I see it as, you know, we obviously have statutory caps on interest for reasons. There are a variety of instances where we step in to regulate things.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): And we're wrong every time we do.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): For good public reasons and in the name of public policy.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): There is nothing better than freedom and capitalism. That is what made this country great, and when the government sticks its nose in and starts to interfere, that's when we have problems, disparities, and injustices, not the other way around.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): But I actually do understand your point because I see, again, that, you know, again, we charge PMI or we allow people to charge PMI because it extends credit. It makes housing available to other people. We allow people to require larger down payments with different loan products because, again, it extends housing opportunities to people. So, I'd be willing to learn more about this. I just want you to know that I am empathetic to, you know, the concerns of some of my colleagues that, you know -- I'll just leave it at that, but I do want to learn more about it.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): I would just say that, I mean, I'm certainly empathetic, if that's the word that we want to use; I don't want to see anyone discriminated against, and I believe that people should be treated fairly in the marketplace, but the way that fairness in the marketplace comes about is by having a level playing field with not restrictions on either side, and a free market, a voluntary exchange, a private contract between two adult citizens. They don't need Mommy and Daddy state government to come along and tell them what to do.

REP. ZULLO (99TH): And thank you for indulging my question, thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you. Senator, thank you for your testimony and your interest on this particular topic. I have no questions for you. This is just a comment. You know, I think it's vitally important that we as leaders here understand that we all come from different walks of life. I also believe that many of us who come before any committee or the work that we do as elected officials, we do it with good intent. And I want to believe that about you. Having served with you in the House, I'm so delighted that you are Senator now and doing some good things. I think in -- I believe it was just an -- and I wasn't going to say anything -- but I believe it's important that within this conversation, there are many, many people -- I mean this conversation has gone to documents on leases and all around what your original proposal was, and that was to increase security deposits. Okay, well here's a question. Here's a question then. Explain to me the purpose of this proposal.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): This is not my bill.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Who is it?

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): I have no idea.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Okay.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): The proposal I asked was to eliminate all restriction on prepayment of rent and security deposits because it is a private contract, and it should be determined by market forces. That is America. That is what was envisioned by our founders. It is what made this country great and amazing --

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Well, I got tell you, some --

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): It has given each of us the opportunity to live fulfilling lives --

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Sure, I gotta tell you, America has not always been too kind to many people, and as a black man, it hasn't been too kind to me. Let me finish. So, what I'm getting at is --

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): What does that have to do with --

REP. MCGEE (5TH): It has everything to do with it. You keep rattling off all of these other types of slogans and things before this committee.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): They're not slogans, Representative.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Hear what I'm saying.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): I appreciate that you're the Chairman of this Committee, but please let me finish. You don't have a right to disrespect me.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): No, no, no, no, no. There's no disrespect here. I think it's a matter of us both understanding different perspectives when it comes to housing, discrimination, and the things that we all face in the State of Connecticut.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): My perspective is that people should be treated as human beings, as free American citizens, and equally on every level.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Sure, that's good. Very good. But the point that I want to make, and it doesn't require a comment or a response from you because it's not a question. Security deposits, we can debate that all day. We can debate the extension of the security deposits. We can debate having a

lease. I think it protects both the landlord as well as the potential or prospective tenant. If we didn't need rules, people would be all peachy keen, and everything would be great.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): Yes, I agree.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): And I'm glad you do. Which is why we need to have leases so that folks understand what they're agreeing upon. And you are saying the other.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): No, I'm not. I believe that we need to have leases, but that lease is between the landlord and the tenant's. It's not between the State of Connecticut or you or I, Representative. It's between the landlord and the tenant, what the terms are, and each of them have an opportunity to agree to those terms, and if they don't like the terms, they can pass on the agreement. That's how a market works. Just like anything else you purchase in life. If you go to the store and you want to purchase a product and you think the price is too much, you walk away, and you go to another place that is offering that product or a similar one for less price, and that's how the rental market should work, also. The rental market fails to work when you make a situation that is negative for landlords so there less rental opportunities for tenants.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): We can definitely agree to disagree. I'm a landlord just like you, if you are. And I appreciate your perspective, and I would love to further have a conversation with you so that we both can better understand where we're coming from.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): My position is contained in the Declaration of Independence. It is in the very first several paragraphs where it describes what our natural rights are.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): And you have every right. Thank you.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your testimony. Thank you for being here. You're welcome anytime like anybody and everybody else, and we appreciate your insight. Thank you.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): With that, the next person on our list from the public is George Dillon. Thank you for your patience, George. Thank you for being here.

GEORGE DILLON: Senator, if you don't mind, I'd like to share part of my time with one of my participants, if he doesn't mind. My name is George Dillon, and I'm the Lead Case Supervisor/Case Manager for CPA Reentry Center. And I'm here on Bill 5242 which discusses reentry for individuals coming from incarceration. I'd like to say that more than 50 percent that come to the Reentry Center are homeless on their first day of release, and this is end of sentence. Those that are on probation and who are on parole, they have parole houses, probation, and these gentlemen are coming in, as you heard from the Department of Correction. They get 48 hours to call the 2-1-1 System to go to a diversion appointment, and what happens is they're told they are on a waiting list. Well after coming

out of incarceration and the turmoil that they have faced for a number of years, to come out and say that I'm going to be homeless. I've heard several of them say, "I was better off locked up."

I'm faced with this impact of trying to get them to become employable and try to reduce recidivism in these individuals coming incarceration, but how can I do that when they have nowhere to live? How can I do that when they've been up all night long? They're in warming centers where it's so tight that they're very uncomfortable sleeping, and I expect them to sit in an employment class and become employment-ready. This is not happening. Some of them that cannot deal with confinement live under bridges, hallways, parks, we're all have to come up in state of the wild. So, these individuals that we want to be productive in our society don't have a shot when they get there.

I'm just taking a look at it, and it's not a city issue, and I believe it's a state issue because it's just not happening in the City of Hartford. It's throughout our state, and we need to be more proactive than reactive. We react when things are going on rather than to be proactive and put things in place to help this. You know, these gentlemen, I always had this vision, and I look at the Delancey Street Project where it was sweat equity from inmates to build Delancey Street, and I've been living here. I'm not going to tell you my age; I've been living here a very long time. And I ride by and see all these abandoned buildings, and why not we're not putting some sweat equity for these individuals. I have a vision that if there was a 90-day stay for people coming out of incarceration -

- you got 90 days to get it together. If you did nothing in 90 days, you didn't want to do anything, but we have to give them a shot. I'm going to let one of the participants talk about his, and he's been out over 30 years, and how his past incarceration continues to impact his life.

CORD SMITH: Hi, good afternoon. I'm Cord Smith. I promise not to debate Mrs. Gonzalez, Senator Anwar [Laughter], and the rest of the house. Very briefly, George spoke about me. I find myself in this very predicament. I was convicted of a crime in '90, and I was released in '96. I graduated from college in the prison system, I got married in the prison system, and I returned thinking that I would be fully invested in the community. Back then, the basic hurdle was just a job. You know, I didn't have to worry about anywhere to live, and I find myself in 2011 briefly being incarcerated for something that was very, very minor. And upon my release, they did a background check, and I was refused housing.

So, now we up fast speed to 2020, and I find myself having to go outside of the box in order to provide for me suitable housing. You know, I'm single, I'm divorced, and I have to go live in a sober solution because they don't ask a lot of questions. They just -- you know, the majority of the people in sober living, sober transit, just so that I can afford a decent place to stay. And I've been far removed from any criminal activity for over 11 years. I should be able to come home and be fully invested into my community, which I pay taxes in. But I can pay taxes, but I can't live next door to

you. Well, you know, something is wrong with that picture. And, again, I'll very brief.

I'm finding it very difficult, and I'm just now not fitting the criteria of their program because I haven't been newly released. So, technically, you're asking me to go commit a crime in order to be helped in any kind of way. Same thing with drugs and alcohol. You're asking me to drink liquor in order to be submitted into one of their treatment centers. I can't just walk off the street and be clean and sober for a couple of days, and that's not here or there; we're not here for that addiction part. But again, I'm vastly, very, very interested in why can't I -- I did my time over 30 years ago, and I'm still struggling to try to find a place to live. Thank you.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH): Thank you so much for being here, and it's important. You're testimony really puts the human face to what we are trying to talk about to many of the people in our communities. I want you to continue to share your experience and continue to speak about this because these are the policies that are actually harming our society. These are the policies which we need to address. Otherwise, we are perpetuating wrong and making it difficult for people to have opportunities going forward and in having a safe home environment. So, thank you for being here. Thank you for fighting this fight.

We are going to try and work on this together, and I think this alludes to the issue that everybody has different experiences, and our responsibility is to respect the experiences people have and then see what can done to make sure that there is some

fairness built into the society, and the fairness definition will be different, but fairness from the perspective to make sure that the people who have had opportunities taken away from them, get the opportunities. That is the fairness in my mind rather than having a rule of the jungle, if you will, where the powerful become more powerful and the weak become weaker. Those are the markets that people talk about. The real market is that have the people who have less opportunities or have opportunities taken away from them to be provided some support and strength to move forward. I truly appreciate you coming in and truly appreciate you sharing your experience. We have Representative Smith and Representative Gonzalez after that. Representative Smith, and then Senator Hwang after that.

REP. SMITH (48TH): Thank you, Mister Chairman. Thank you, Sir, for spending time with us today. You know, I agree with Senator Anwar that it is nice to have a face behind the microphone of somebody who's experienced what you experienced, to come testify to us because too often we just hear about it, and for some of us, we never really have to face it, but to have you come before us today is appreciated. Can I ask you the housing issues that you're having, are they public housing or is it private housing or both?

CORD SMITH: It's any kind of housing due to the background check. I mean, I can work, I go to school, and apparently when the pendulum swings towards that now it's a double sword for me because it's a background check for a job, background check for housing. I don't stand a chance, and now, if

you want to raise the rent -- I mean, the security to three month, I couldn't even afford a doghouse. So, I mean, we're going to the point where this is getting really ridiculous. So, yes, it's both. It's housing, it's public housing and, right now, I'm living in a sober solution, a sober environment because that's the only place that I can live. I have a job, but that's the only place that I can live that won't do a background check on me because the majority of the people who are living in the house have certain backgrounds that are not allowing them to go into the free market to get housing.

GEORGE DILLON: So, and if you don't mind me on that, I'm a property owner now, but when I decided to buy property, my background check kept me from getting a loan. Okay, and my wife had to buy the property, and because we're married, she had to add me to the property as a property owner. So, I mean, when, and I say "when" because his crime was 30 years ago, are we exonerated. As he said, "I pay taxes, I worked in every entity, and I get turned down certain jobs like a babysitting job, pretty much, because of something I did 30 years ago, a bad incident I had 30 years ago. Something has to change here for us.

REP. SMITH (48TH): So, it's interesting. You know, it's the first I've heard of someone being denied a loan because they had a criminal record. [Laughter]

GEORGE DILLON: First time I heard it, too.

REP. SMITH (48TH): And I'm generally curious in the responses that you -- I understand from public authority standpoints that we have several rules on the book that should be changed, in my opinion, that

prohibit housing to folks who are in your situation. But from a private landlord's standpoint, you know, I think I spoke earlier that when you have two applications in front of you, and all things being equal, one has a criminal record and one doesn't. You know, unless you make a really strong opinion and present yourself like you're the person I want to have living in my rental unit, you're probably going to go with the other person. It's just, you know, all things being equal.

But I wondering what the responses are even if you get to the point of getting a response because I know background checks are more common, but mostly it's credit checks these days, and landlords are more concerned about what's your credit like. Do you have the ability to pay? Are they coming back to you and saying, "Listen, you had a criminal conviction in 1990 or 1996; I can't rent this to you because of that?" I mean, are you actually hearing that?

CORD SMITH: Yeah, that's basically what it is. Like for a job, they go back seven years. Okay, well great. I haven't been arrested in 11. Good, I can get this job. But, for housing, they can go back as far as they want to go back. They can go state, they can go city, they can go federal, and that's pretty much the nail in the coffin is what this is. It's because when I find a reason to keep you out, then I find a reason to keep you out. But, again, I pay taxes, I work, I go to school. I should be able to live somewhere other than somebody telling me I gotta be in at 11 o'clock. I'm 59 years old, and I gotta be home at 11 o'clock. That's ridiculous.

REP. SMITH (48TH): I would agree with you. I would agree with you 100 percent. Nobody should be telling you when -- you know, as long as you're not breaking any laws, then you should be able to do what you want whether it's you want to stay out to four o'clock in the morning, God bless you.

CORD SMITH: Yeah, I'm reduced [Loud laughter] so I should have nothing to be doing at four o'clock in the morning other than working [Crosstalk]

REP. SMITH (48TH): Sometimes they keep us here that late. Sometimes Representative McGee talks a lot in the House, and that's what happens. [Laughter] I'm wondering, though, we had this conversation the last session about, you know, the erasure -- complete erasure of criminal records. And there was some conversation of erasure after a certain number of years, seven years, ten years. I'd like to hear from both of you, if you would, whether complete erasure in your mind is the way to go. Now, you've been convicted. You're coming to testify for us, but you've lived that in the past, but it's still haunting you based on what I'm hearing.

I have trouble honestly with complete erasure. I have trouble with making believe it didn't happen, but I could be persuaded on a certain number of years that after -- if you could convince me after a certain number of years, and I don't know what, I'd like to hear from you what you think that should be, that you're no longer in trouble, and you're not going to be in trouble. You've moved well past that. I know many individuals who were arrested 18, 19, 20 years old, usually drug-related. They're now 40, 50 years old, but they have a felony conviction because back then that's what some of the

possessions were. So, that stays with them for the rest of their lives, but they're still limited in what they can do, but they're still able to do certain things. Do you have an opinion as to complete erasures or a certain timeframe?

CORD SMITH: I agree with you. Certain crimes shouldn't be completely erased. You can look back at a pardon for someone in my situation. I'm looking to be pardoned from someone in my situation. Some situations, like for work, they only look back at seven years, you know, depending on the severity of the crime. I don't think no, you know, no severe crime should be erased. You should know -- everybody should feel comfortable or safe. Everybody has a right for that. I truly believe in that. But I believe that if you have to go back 30 years to exclude somebody from something, then you really don't want that person in.

So, you know, again, there should be some cutoff point -- misdemeanors, then you have felonies, and then you have other crimes, and at some point, you should be able to say, "Okay, well this a cutoff point for the landlord to go." Because, like in my job, they went back seven years, and I was able to get the job because I hadn't been arrested in 11 years. So, if they kept going back further and further, I would never be able to work. And I'm 59 years old. I don't have a lot of time to be playing around with working at, you know, McDonald's or anything like that. Wholeheartedly, I'd take it. I went to jail and worked for 75 cents a week; why wouldn't I work for ten or whatever it is now. That doesn't make any sense. That doesn't equate with me. So, yeah, there should be some cutoff point.

REP. SMITH (48TH): Do you have an opinion, as well?

GEORGE DILLON: Always. [Laughter] And I was talking with my boss one day, and we were just talking about past incarceration, and anyone that knows me knows that I've worked in the court systems, I've worked all through the state, in every shelter there is. And a couple years back, I applied for work at the warming center because I said, "Well, I can get some gas money," you know. I'm bored at home anyway; I'm married. [Laughter] So, I applied, and she was really excited about me that I applied. And the day of the first training, she had tears in her eyes. She said, "I can't hire you." The record came back, and this is 30 years old. Thirty years, I got in a fight, 30 years. They tell you when you're in the boxing ring, protect yourself at all times. How do you think it works on the street? You protect yourself at all times, no matter what. That happened 30 years ago, a bad incident. How long does a person have to drag this anvil of not being productive? I'm productive in every aspect of life, but I can't babysit 60 people. When I was watching 100 people at one shelter, and there's 125 at another.

REP. SMITH (48TH): Well, thank you for sharing the experiences today, and, you know, it's a great subject, and I hope we can do something to move this forward. Our goal here, and I think I speak for everybody on this Committee, is to make sure folks like you get back into society because you're doing us any good if you're not working, and if you're homeless, that doesn't help you and it doesn't the state. So, our goal is to figure out a way. And I think that we also have to figure out a way when you

first get out of incarceration to get you back into a society, we can provide some housing, and a transition period where you have a job and get back on your feet. Otherwise, like you said before, you know, there are some folks that you say, "Listen, I'd rather go back to jail. I have three meals, and I know what I'm dealing with."

GEORGE DILLON: It's all right to fall down, but, you know, it's not all right to stay down.

REP. SMITH (48TH): To you again, thank you, Sir.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Representative Smith, and thank you for your questions and your responses. I appreciate it. Don't go yet. We have a lot of other people. Yes, you're stars. Senator Hwang, and then we'll have -- Oh, sorry. I'm so sorry. Representative Gonzalez, yes.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): My turn, my turn. Thank you very much. And thank you, both of you, to come in and share your story with us. I just have a comment; I don't have a question. But yesterday the black and Puerto Rican caucuses were meeting, and we were talking about those issues, and we didn't have people that came and testified in front of us with that kind of problem. And I think that people that made a mistake when they were young, and they have to pay all their lives. Me, my personal opinion is that that's very unfair. I don't think that when you're young and you made a mistake, that doesn't mean that you 20 years later, you're the same person.

I also can tell you that we have the same problem with DCF, that if you're a grandparent and you made a mistake when you were 18 years old, now you want

to take care of your grandkid, they're going to use your record, 20 or 25 years ago, not to allow you to raise your grandkids, but they can give your grandkids to somebody that is not family. So, I know that that is a problem. But we need more people like you that come to us and, you know, share with us your story because sometimes we're up here, and we believe that everything -- even though, you know, people like they come from a poor district and a district that is mostly Latino, we face those kind of issues all the time.

So, I think that you came to the place. I think that you've got people here that are listening to your problems, and, hopefully, we can work together so we can resolve some of those problems because we got people right now in our community for years, they've been trying to get a job, and they want to do good. But because of that problem, they can't find a job, and how many people do we have in the shelters that they don't belong. I'm not saying nobody belong in the shelter, but we have people right now that because of a mistake, you know, for years and years, they're still in a shelter, and they can't come back to society because people will point, you know, fingers at you because of that. So, thank you again for sharing your stories, and, hopefully, we will try to see if we can fix the problem and help you guys. Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Representative Gonzalez. We have Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mister Chair. You two did a great job, and you are a testament to the

commitment that you made in moving your life forward. I always take the adage that good people can make mistakes, but you shouldn't be wearing that for the rest of your life. I'm encouraged to know that in this building many years back we worked together to eliminate the box in the employment interview in the application standpoint. And what we're looking to do in some of the things we're doing in housing is to address some of the housing considerations in that. And I've repeatedly said that we need to engage all the shareholders and to try to get to a solution. But you are two examples of individuals that have paid for your mistake to society, and you have changed your life around, and you shouldn't be punished anymore for mistakes that have been made.

So, I'm encouraged. I want to compliment that leadership of the Committee for raising this issue, to talk about it, to hear testimony from people like you. You represent so many other people that have made mistakes, rightfully or wrongly, but have moved forward in creating a better life, and the foundation of that has to be an opportunity to have a roof over your head and a stability of a foundation. So, I'm fully supportive of your efforts, your true role models, and the people and the organizations that support you are noble organizations and wonderful efforts, but, nevertheless, I think it has to be incorporated where there's balance, and I hope to continually engage both of you and many others to have your voice be heard. So, I want to thank you very, very much. I want to thank the Chairs for raising these bills for consideration, and I think you said the smartest thing this afternoon -- You're not going to

disagree with Representative Gonzalez. You're a smart, smart man. [Laughter]. So, thank you, Mister Chair, for the indulgence. But thank you, both of you, thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you. And Representative Rochelle.

REP. ROCHELLE (104TH): Senator Anwar. I just want to thank you for sharing your stories, and what you were discussing made me think of some testimony that we heard last year during discussing the Clean Slate Initiative. And it was said by -- there's a Yale study that said that after seven years, if somebody hasn't reoffended, they are statistically even with somebody who has never offended. They're just as likely or not likely to offend as somebody who never offended. So you feel like that holds true, and initiatives like the ones that we're looking at give folks a goal and hope, something to work towards, knowing that they will be made whole and have an opportunity to walk through society as if they don't have these felonies on their record or things hanging over their heads.

GEORGE DILLON: Well, I'm a firm believer in if you've been off the system and you begin to put your life together, you're not going to allow what you did 30 years ago to impact your life in 2020. Even in my household, you know, everybody don't always get along, but they know my nickname is 911; I'm calling the police first. I'm not going to allow my life to be impacted about decisions that don't, you know -- tomorrow where it's at, we're sorry? But I have to drag the anvil a little longer. I'm not allowing that today. The people that come through the Welcome Center, I tell em, "Today, you're not an

inmate; you're a returned citizen." We have to start to put dignity in these individuals coming home, empower them to want to do better

That's why the housing piece is such a critical piece for them. If I have nowhere to lay my head, how can I expect you to sit up in a group and stay awake? If you walk the street all night, especially it's been wintertime -- some people are so terrified of being confined like this, they just walk the street back and forth, back and forth. And when they come into the Center, they have a cup of coffee and just sleep in the corner, get your rest. I understand what we're facing. That's why it's very important that we find something else. Whether we take one of these abandoned buildings no one want to pay the taxes on, refurbish it, and put them in there so they have somewhere to come. You know, you said returning home not returning to the bridge, and I expect you not to throw another brick because if I give you what you left, you're going to do what you did. So, we as an organization, we have to begin to empower these people to do better by helping them be better.

REP. ROCHELLE (104TH): Thank you. I think dignity's at the core of this issue, and thank you for highlighting that.

GEORGE DILLON: Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Can you just repeat your last sentence. It is very powerful.

GEORGE DILLON: I've got gray hair; I probably can't remember that.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): It's like if you lead -- just phenomenal. It just touched me, and can't even

GEORGE DILLON: We as individuals have to continue to empower them to do better. I don't think anyone comes out of incarceration wanting to go back; however, circumstances allow them to go back. Basic needs. You know, I'm just fortunate enough to be able to help individuals come out, whether it's a backpack full of all your toiletries. One of the things that has to happen -- our housing laws have to change. The homelessness law, and I know it's a federal government issue, but a family member takes you out of the cold, and you're no longer homeless, but you're sleeping on the corner on some blankets in a corner because they didn't even have the space. They just didn't want you freezing, or they gave you the couch. You're homeless. If your name is not on the lease, you're homeless because at any time I could say goodbye. So, we are shortchanging them on trying to get them to a better place when little things like that impact their lives.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you. Thank you, again, for your testimony. If you can at least give your contact information to us because when this bill moves out of this Committee, our fellow legislators need to hear this story and humanize the experience that you are having because otherwise they keep saying, "Oh, it's not real," and that's our challenge. I'll have my Co-Chair say a few words.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I really appreciate this Committee for their indulgence because I really didn't have to say anything; I think everybody said it. But my Dad, who passed away on the day of my college graduation, would have been 66 this year,

and when I look at you two men, I could only help but to think about Brandon McGee, Sr. But I tried to chew on my skittles back here, I tried to drink the water to avoid getting too emotional. But you two, among many other men -- black, white, Puerto Rican -- it doesn't matter sometimes. In this situation, everybody's coming home and wants an opportunity. And I say all that to say please continue to share your stories with people whether they want to hear it or not. What you're talking about should be a right to housing, and how we get there, it's going to be a long road, but I do believe that individuals on this Committee are committed to having the conversation and, most importantly, learning what it will take to get there. So, thank you, for stepping in for my Daddy who, unfortunately, couldn't be here to share his story, but the story is so much the same. So, I'll stop there, but please come back as has already been mentioned, and share your story with as many people who could possibly hear. And the last thing is share it with people who wouldn't normally consider this their problem and let them know there are humans behind these stories. Thanks, again, for testifying.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, again. Thank you so much. Next is Representative Susan Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Good afternoon. I'm Representative Susan Johnson. I represent the 49th House District. Thank you so much for hearing House Bill 5239 - AN ACT CONCERNING PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES FOR STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY PROPERTIES. I really appreciate the work of the Committee and the

Chairs and the ranking members and the distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you so much.

This is an issue that has been a real problem for my district and many other districts that are host to public housing, and also districts that are in a circumstance where they have a large percentage of their properties that are nontaxable. My district has approximately 42 percent of the property in my district is not taxable. And some of it's reimbursed through payment in lieu of taxes, and some of it is not. And as you heard earlier from the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner of Housing, the problem has been that a few years back - I think it was 2015 - we stopped paying for Housing Authority properties, and the State stopped making those payments, and they also waived the Housing Authority's duty to pay something to the town.

So, this has about to expire, and I'm hoping what will happen is that this will come out of Committee and that we will be able to finally have the State make the reimbursements to all the towns that host that. One thing that I might point out is that the towns that have a situation where they have a high percentage of properties that are untaxable and they're not even getting payment in lieu of taxes because they're not included in the statute that allows payment in lieu of taxes, and that is all listed in the statute. It's not based on whether you're a nonprofit; that's a federal law, as you know.

So, nonprofits sometimes are not exempt, but most of the time, when you have housing authorities, you have a large percentage of just Housing Authority

populations as students. So, what happens is the town is squeezed now. It's not getting the money on the housing side through the taxable property side, but also most of these communities are not receiving the full education cost-sharing grant. They're receiving some lower percentage. My community for years only received about 72 percent one year. A couple years, we had a situation where we had a special master; they gave us an additional four million that brought us up to about 76 percent or so, but we've never really hit the whole amount of money.

Whereas my surrounding suburban towns have been getting about 90 percent or 100 percent. Some even get 150 percent of ECS. So, at some time before we looked into this in Appropriations, some towns were getting almost 400 percent of ECS. And now the other thing about PILOT that I want you to keep in mind is that the PILOT money, towns that don't have any state property at all or have very little, get a minimum payment, whereas we do not actually get the full amount.

So having such a huge percentage of my property in my district at 43 percent non-taxable, only getting such a small amount, 30 percent, of what would really be owed to us if we had regular taxable property, and then also being cheated on the other side to the tune of several million dollars on the ECS formula, we are in a situation where we are creating a problem for our students in our school systems. Our students in our school systems are not getting what they're supposed to get in education in these districts.

And this is mostly districts that serve their region. They serve their region by hosting the hospital, by hosting public housing, by hosting affordable housing, by hosting low-income housing, by hosting, you know, all types of skilled nursing facilities. By doing the service of the region, and then getting short-changed when they're helping the state by services. So, I'm very pleased to have this listened to, and I appreciate all your work. So, thank you so much. And my testimony's on-line, and I also provided you with some of the analysis with respect to the payment in lieu of taxes charts for all the towns so you can do a comparison and contrast. One thing that inspired me to do this is the idea that we hear so much about the income tax in Fairfield County, but we don't ever hear about the subsidies that the urban centers give to the state, which is around \$8 billion dollars all in all.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much, Representative Johnson. Thank you for your patience today and your testimony and very important words. Thank you.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much. Thank you for your work.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Seeing no other comments. Thank you. The next person on our list is Josh Frazier or Robert Borocho. Thank you so much for your patience today, and thank you for being here.

ROBERT BOROCH: My name is Robert Borocho, inmate number 176645. I just wanted to, you know, commend Senator Anwar. I was here back on October 31. I mentioned about the 2-1-1, and I was very surprised

that you haven't mentioned it to me today that, you're now trying to put that into effect.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): That would be the Robert Boroch Law if it passes. I appreciate that, and, again, I'm really surprised. I was incarcerated. I was given a 2-1-1 call 48 hours prior to release. Upon that call, I was told that it was going to be a three-and-a-half week wait before I could even do the intake paperwork to get on the list for a shelter. I ended up going to -- I got out, I went to the Warming Center. The Warming Center called; they had a couple beds open. I ended up going into one of the shelters, ImmaCare on Park and Hungerford, and, you know, not that I'm any better than anybody else, 'cause I'm not, but I didn't blend well with a lot of the individuals that were in there. It's not a dry shelter. I have, you know, a couple mental health issues, PTSD, IED, anyways.

After some altercations, I was asked to leave; so, I left. And rather than go into another setting like that, I chose to stay under the bridge down by the bus station. Across the street from the Federal Café, there's a little parking lot, and you go through that parking lot, and right under the bridge there, that's where I was staying. I ended up -- I had gone through -- when I first got out, they brought me to the Reentry Welcome Center, Community Partners in Action, which was an enormous help because I didn't know where I was going, what I was going to do. They helped me out. They directed me, you know, there are the resources that are available. There's a warming center you can go to;

here's the bus pass to get you there, toiletries and things like that. They helped out a lot.

When I was staying under the bridge, trying to find a job. You know, when you go on Craig's List, you know, you punch on that job, and it's background check, background check, background check. I ended up getting a job with Cirque du Soleil, break up and set up, break down and set up, and long story short, I ended up one of the guys dropped one of the flooring plates, he bumped into me, I went over the edge. I lacerated my liver, I messed up my back. I'm waiting for surgery. They're going to pull out two disks out of my back. I was in a nursing home for a while. And this program, MFP, Money Follows the People, they interviewed me. Because I had a criminal background, they were a little hesitant on my approval, but I got a couple recommendations from some reputable people, and I was accepted, and ended up -- I just signed my lease about a month ago.

I'm trying to get back on my feet. Senator Anwar knows. I spoke in Windsor, and I was walking with a walker when I was supposed to be in a wheelchair. I'm walking with a cane now that I'm supposed to be walking with a walker. I actually, while I was in the nursing home in a wheelchair, I went and I got my OSHA 10 card. I'm not an individual that you can keep down, you know. But it does get very tiring when, you know, you click on a job, and you see "background check, background check," and then you know you call, and it's like don't even waste your time if, you know, you have a background check, you know, because if they do that, they're going to see a criminal history and then, you know --

I've dealt with the Reentry Welcome Center quite a bit. They're not just 9 to 5'ers. You know, they care about you, you know what I mean? Like, you know, give you a little smack in the head and say, "That's not the right decision; you need to do this." You know what I mean? Sometimes people need that.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Rob, you want to wrap up because we're extremely out of time.

ROBERT BOROCH: Yep, yep. I'm sorry. And I just wanted to say, you know, Representative Gonzalez, I really didn't care what the price was when I signed that lease because it was a certificate I was looking at. There's going to be a roof over my head, or there's not going to be. So, I signed that lease. So, you know, you are right, matter of fact. I appreciate your time. Thank you very much.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, again, for your testimony. Thank you for being here. I just want to mention a little bit of our conversation in the past. We had a conversation around homelessness a few months ago, and then we had a number of individuals educate many of us in the community about their experiences, and one of the conversations was that the waiting time on 2-1-1 was longer, and people were using up their minutes, and we were just looking at what are the solutions, and that's when Rob, you said, "Well, maybe we shouldn't be charging for 2-1-1," and we said, "Yeah, why not," and now we have a bill which is saying that the LifeLine phones, we are hoping that that would no longer charge the time -- the minutes -- when you call 2-1-1. That like should be a call, and we're exploring that because people use that at very

critical and difficult times, and you have very limited number of minutes there.

But the other good news is that they have a text system now, and you can text it, and that's just one text, and they will call you. And I've tried it, and it works. And they kept following me to make sure I was not homeless and they wanted to help me, and I said, "Yes, I am thankfully fine right now. Somedays, it's questionable, but right now I'm fine," and that's when they said it's okay. But the text works well. Do you have any questions? Yes, Representative Gonzalez.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Thank you. And I first I've got a question. When you say it was a dry shelter, what do you mean by that?

ROBERT BOROCH: Unfortunately, there's a lot of substance abuse issues, and in the shelters, you know, people are under the influence of whatever. Some are falling asleep or nodding. Some are wanting to running around all -- you know, what I mean, and I just didn't blend well what them, and there were several altercations, you know, and I was told to leave. So, I found it better to stay under the bridge rather than jeopardize an altercation which would end up in my possible re-incarceration.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): About the manager in that place -- and the reason I'm asking is because that's my district, and I know that a lot of people complain about managers at that place. What did you think about?

ROBERT BOROCH: I was looked at as a problem-some. I have a type A personality, and I have no problem videotaping employees who come in with an empty

knapsack and leave with a full knapsack. I actually followed one of the employees across the street, and I was told that I could be thrown out for videotaping him because he came in with an empty knapsack and left with a full one. What did you take? The shelter received a lot of donations -- razors, toiletries, shampoos, a lot of stuff. So, I didn't see what you put in your bag, but, again, it's not rocket science, you know?

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Well, thank you for that information. I always been concerned about that shelter. It's in my district, and I always tried to help it as much as I can. Right now, the received a lot of money to rehab the place, and eventually in a couple of more months, they're going to be opening the doors. So, it's interesting that I have to get some information, you know, from people that come here to testify. But, that's very good information because I'm going to keep my eye on them.

ROBERT BOROCH: Well, just to bring up one instance where Mach3 or Mach5 razors came in through the front door and went out the back door, and I said to the guy, I said, "Lou, what's going on. Why'd you bring them in the front, put 'em out the back?" "Well, they're going to another shelter." "Well, why didn't you just take them and put them in your car? Why did you bring them in through the front door and out the back?" Again, it's not rocket science, you know.

REP. GONZALEZ (3RD): Well, thank you for that information, and before when we were talking with a Senator about taking the restriction in that, in the bill of housing. And the comment that he really agreed or he believed that if we take those

restrictions in that bill because right now the landlords are at a disadvantage. I don't agree. I think that it'll be the opposite. The tenants or the potential tenant is going to be very, you know, disadvantaged if we remove all of that. So, thank you for sharing your story.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you. Seeing no other questions or comments. Thank you so much for your testimony, and I wanted to apologize. I, by mistake, missed Reverend Ernestine Holloway. My apologies for that, Reverend.

REVEREND HOLLOWAY: I'm not yelling at anybody today.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you.

REVEREND HOLLOWAY: My name is Ernestine Holloway. I am the second vice president of CTRA. I'm the CFO of Serenity House, Inc. I'm also the pastor of Serenity House Elkanah Ministry, and I'm also in inner city advocate. So that makes me either nuts or just love what I do.

I'm going to address something that Representative Gonzalez talked about, the shelter. I got here because of domestic violence, and I lived in a shelter. And just like the gentleman said, I watched a lot of stuff go out the door, and my daughter told me, "Ma, you're a pastor. You can't let that happen." Well, I stepped in, and we got kicked out. And I'm going to say this. We've given a lot of money as a state, and I say "we" because it's our tax money, and everybody in the building's tax money, and we forgot to watch where the money was going. So, as you go further and you give out

money, I think you need to go back and check out what's going on.

We're giving money to shelters. They're charging people rent. Well, hello. If they could pay rent, they wouldn't need to be living in the damn shelter. I'm in Meriden, and a young lady came to me. She had a baby, and she had a brain issue, and they told her if she didn't have rent, she couldn't live there. And, so, 2-1-1, which I'm not a fan of, sent her there, and then the advocate center in the neighborhoods, you make my job harder because then I got to go fight with them. Not that I mind. So, you need to keep an eye on who you're giving money to. When you leave the shelters, now what they do is they give the money to the shelter so that you can get a bed. Everybody that left New Opportunity on Casimir Drive, none of them had beds. You know how I know? Because I bought 'em all. I had to go to New Opportunity and say, "You're moving this family, and she ain't got no furniture, and you'd better get her some." She got five kids. So, there's a disconnect that's going on. So, we need to fix that. Stop giving people money without watching them. You give me \$500 million and you don't watch me, I'm going to do what I want to do also. That's just simple logic. If you don't follow the paper to see where it's going or ask the clients if they get it, you will never know.

But I also want to address real quickly my favorite here, and I couldn't wait until this bill came out. The community bill concerning group homes. How people -- I want to say greedy people -- are using the group home status to open up single-room occupancies because that's what they're called.

Meriden has 55 recovery houses. That's because they're hiding under the ADA guidelines. "We handle people that have special needs." So, I asked, "What do you consider special needs?" "Oh, if you have a drug and alcohol problem." "Really." So because I don't believe anything anybody tells me -- and by the way, I'm not anti-recovery because I've got over 28 years clean, so I'm telling you what I know. So, and he said me and my daughter could live here. I said, "Live where." He said, "In the recovery house." I said, "You all let children live there?" And so what I learned was, he had four people to room, charging \$650 dollars. Now, I'm not a math rocket scientist, but I know 6 and 6 is 12 and 12 and 12 is 24, so if he got four bedrooms, he's getting paid. And then I asked was that tax dollars because I'm a tax payer.

So, when I heard this morning at that press conference that they were trying to correct it and amend it where they can't use that status, I was more than excited because what you don't understand is these places come in, they charge you so much money, and then after 90 days, if you don't have that money, they put you out on the street, and then you become a ward of that same shelter that you cannot afford. Sorry, sometimes my Spanish and English get a little twisted up in there. So, you bring them to the shelter because they can't pay you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Reverend, if you can start to wrap up, too, if you don't mind.

REVEREND HOLLOWAY: So, this bill will help a lot of cities, not only Fairfield. It will help so many cities handle that issue because they wouldn't be

able to use this as a crutch. So, they all start off with one bedroom. They all start off with this is going to be great. But what they are is single-room occupancy, and if you don't stop them now, Meriden will have 75, New Britain will have 80, and I wish I could tell you where they were, but because they do it in a recovery meeting, and everything is anonymity, I can't tell you. But, I'm grateful to see that you're trying to fix this because, guess what? They're still drunkards, they're still getting high, and when they get drunk and kids were saying, "Look at that big man over there; he's over the thing and he's throwing up all over the place," and all the kids in the neighborhood are watching 'cause they're not getting any training. They're not getting any help. They're not getting any substance abuse counseling. They're not going through DMHAS. That's the purpose of us having it.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Reverend, thank you so much for your testimony. Thank you. Does anyone have any questions? Seeing none, thank you so much. We appreciate your insight, and this was very valuable. Thank you, and thank you for your patience today. Next, is Steve Hernandez. He's not here. I think we'll wait; if he comes, we will have him. Next is Kiley Gosselin. Kiley, thank you so much for your patience, and thank you for being here.

KILEY GOSSELIN: Good afternoon, Senator Anwar and Representative McGee, ranking members and members of the Committee. Many of you know me. My name is Kiley Gosselin, and I'm Executive Director of the Partnership for Strong Communities. We're a statewide nonprofit and advocacy organization

dedicated to ending homelessness and expanding housing opportunities across the state.

Our written testimony includes several bills. I just wanted to highlight a couple quickly for you today, and maybe add some more statistics and information to some of the testimony that we've already heard.

First, I'd like to talk about the security deposit bill, House Bill No. 5245. The median renter household income in Connecticut is \$42,500 dollars. The fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment is a little over \$1300 dollars. So, if you require three months' rent for a security deposit on top of a first month's rent and last month's rent in advance of moving in, a renter would need \$6600 dollars in cash just to get into that apartment. So, that represents more than 15 percent of the pre-taxed income of that median renter's household. Again, that's the median renters. We're talking about a whole host of people who need to rent housing who may not be able to, if that barrier was there. And I'd also just like to say I think that this could also be used, as Rafie described, as a proxy for discrimination for folks exiting the criminal justice system, people of color, just folks who don't have as much income as someone else, and, so, for that reason, we strongly oppose the bill.

I also want to talk about Senate Hill 184 Workforce housing development. We support the goal of the bill to create additional opportunities for housing development for Connecticut's workforce community. We also support the bill's increase in the maximum amount of tax credits available for business firms making cash contributions under 8-395. However, we

want to raise a couple concerns about several aspects of the bill. And there are some other items that we've put in our written testimony that we feel could strengthen the bill. But, generally, calling out specific professions as deserving of affordable housing while ignoring others who might be able to or need to access that housing is problematic and, I would say, arguably discriminatory. It also decreases the available pool of renters, making leasing it more challenging while you have hundreds of thousands of severely rent-burdened households in our state sitting on the sidelines waiting for that affordable housing relief. So, again, we understand the goals behind the bill and would be welcome to offer our assistance if the Committee sees fit to craft amendments based on our comments.

I also just quickly will note that we support PILOTs for state Housing Authority properties. That's something I feel strongly about, as my current position and also my prior position as heading up Hartford's Development Office. It's a disincentive to towns to create affordable housing if the state doesn't make good on that PILOT program. Thanks.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your testimony. Can you mention some of the quick list of the other bills and your positions?

KILEY GOSSELIN: Sure. We have the 2-1-1 LifeLine phone bill which you have in there, which we're supporting, as well. The Healthy Housing PILOT which creates new vouchers for healthy housing programs specifically for folks with asthma. We think that is critical, as well. We're supporting House Bill 5242 which many have spoken here more eloquently than I could. Against 5240, requirements

for new affordable housing construction, as it could create further barriers to developing affordable housing which is already something that we have challenges with. I think I've listed everything, yes. And the two PILOT bills were, just so I have them on the record, Senate Bill 186 and House Bill 5239.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your testimony, and we'll take you up on your suggestion on 184 later on. Any questions, any comments. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you very much for your patience in going through this. I actually was curious. The Healthy Housing PILOT, 186, and H.B. 5239. So, was that the one related to making improvements in housing. What was the one that you were opposed to as creating a challenge?

KILEY GOSSELIN: We are supporting Senate Bill 186 and 5239; those are the payment in lieu of taxes bills that affect affordable housing properties greatly. The bill I was talking about, the requirements for new affordable housing construction, House Bill 5240. So, while we commend the goal of it to incorporate energy efficiency into properties, we oppose imposing additional requirements on the construction of affordable housing. Constructing housing is already very costly in Connecticut. By imposing additional requirements on the development of affordable housing, we feel it could dis-incentivize the construction of new units that we desperately need, as you accurately described at the beginning of this hearing.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And I apologize; it's been a long day for all of us. And, indeed, but I think that one of the premises to raising the bill to create energy efficiency is for residents of these properties, energy cost is, in fact, one of the highest percentages of their annual obligations, and our idea is the thought of being able to utilize the Governor's commitment to renewable energy by 2050 and to be able to mix in innovations as well as initiatives from federal and state government. It would fit very well with new constructions. I see it less as an obstacle, and the end result would complement our renewable energy goals and at the same time, significantly reduce cost for residents in those units. I don't know if your organization had interacted with OPM as well as the Governor's Office in regard to their commitment to renewable energy by 2050 and see if there are possible allocations of funds to complement that. I would offer if those issues are alleviated, would your organization consider from a long-term energy sustainability as well as a cost savings to residents in those new initiatives, it would be a win-win.

KILEY GOSSELIN: Yeah, absolutely, and I think it's important to note that in some properties, residents are paying their own utilities or are on a scale based on income, but in other properties, they are not, right? So the benefits of those energy efficiencies are seen by the owners of those properties. That being said, I think if additional funds can be identified, we're all in favor of making more energy-efficient properties. That's something I personally feel strongly about, and our organization has spent a good amount of time working

with our friends at Connecticut Green Bank and similar organizations on those issues. So, I'd welcome the opportunity, if we're able to create affordable housing in a way that is cost-effective and doesn't dis-incentivize its production if we can identify other resources for those improvements, I'm all ears and happy to help you work on it further.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And I appreciate that clarification because it has to be a federal, state, and local collaborative to initiate that, but obviously the Governor has made a state focus and a commitment to 2050, and if we could -- and I hope mutually that we have a spurt of growth of new housing initiatives to meet the need that we all agree does exist. I think it will actually be a win-win again to be able to focus on energy conservation and renewable energy into every aspect that may spill over into residential building as well as commercial building. So, I would encourage that -- I appreciate the clarification, and I would encourage that as we begin this initiative, if it can be cost-effective, and if there are appropriate funds to allocate to create a new sustainable, renewable energy program for the state and into this country, I think we should explore that and work together toward that. Thank you, Mister Chair.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you. Any other comments? Seeing none. Thank you so much for your testimony and your work. Thank you. Next is Chris Kokkinakos. Not here anymore? And then next is Richard Cho. Thank you, Richard. Thank you for your patience.

RICHARD CHO: No problem. Thank you very much for having me. Good afternoon, Senator Anwar,

Representative McGee, Senator Hwang, and other distinguished members of the Housing Committee. I'm Richard Cho, and I'm with the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. Sorry, I've had a lot of jobs in my time. I'm here to testify on three bills.

I'll spend most of my time on H.B. 5242 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE RISK OF HOMELESSNESS FOR THOSE RELEASED FROM THE CUSTODY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION. You've already heard from people who've actually lived the experience of being discharged from prisons in our state and who subsequently experienced homelessness. I'll tell you that you've heard from now three people. Our data shows after a data mesh that we conducted with the State Department of Correction and our homeless system data that there are at least 1200 people every year who've been released from the Department of Correction and who wind up using our homeless shelters every year. That also does not include the people who wind up leaving prisons or jails and who sleep on the streets or in their vehicles or in other places where our data are not as good.

So, there're more than 1200 people every year in our shelters, and I ask what's the public safety benefit of having people leave prisons who end up homeless and who have difficulty meeting the terms of probation and parole supervision, who have greater temptation to go back to drugs and alcohol and who end up spending time back in prisons. We also found the vast majority of these folks are folks who have six or more prior convictions to DOC. They've been on a cycle for decades, and many of them began their first DOC involvement as adolescents, as youths. And so they've been on -- they went on a school-to-

prison pipeline, were subsequently discharged to homelessness, and have been on a cycle of homelessness and incarceration for years.

And, so, a natural question to ask, and I believe an earlier question was about the 2-1-1 system, is why can't the homeless system just absorb this population and provide assistance to them. Our system actually receives about 27,000 referrals every year from the state's 2-1-1 system. I know 2-1-1 and United Way of Connecticut received over 75,000 to 80,000 calls every year relating to housing assistance. Our system is flooded. We then actually assess and assist 13,000 people through CAN appointments. We divert 5000 households from shelter, 6000-or-so household enter shelter every year, and we are struggling to rehouse even the people who are coming to our system from the community.

We don't think the solution should be for the Department of Correction to have to resort and lean on the 2-1-1 and CAN system for help. We believe we need to give the Department of Correction the tools and the resources and the accountability to be able to address the housing needs proactively, and you've heard earlier that DOC is willing to do that. We support H.B. 5242, and we believe it could be strengthened by also adding a component to cover people who are under probation supervision and who are being supervised by the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch and to provide them with the resources, as well, to be able to assist probationers who are experiencing homelessness. I'll stop there. Happy to answer any questions.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your testimony. Are there other bills you wanted to speak on?

RICHARD CHO: Yeah, just briefly I want to state my support for S.B. 183 which has to do with not charging a fee or taking time off cellular minutes for people who call the 2-1-1 system. We fully support that. We don't want to create any more barriers for people to seek help who are on the community. We also want to state our strong opposition to H.B. 5245. One of the biggest reasons why people are in our homeless system and we have difficulty actually helping them exit is because of the prohibitive cost of housing, particularly the front-end cost of security deposits. And, so, you have people in our shelters who are working today. You have people who come and seek shelter who are working today, and they're working full-time, but, as others have mentioned before, if you're trying to rent a two-bedroom apartment for \$1200 dollars, very few people in the homeless system who are low-income, even if they're working full-time, can afford \$3600 dollars and have savings. So, we try to assist them to the extent we can, but to extend that to even three months would, I think, really be harmful.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, again, for your testimony. I wanted to ask you about this 5242, and we just learned about the timeline that has been set through the guidance from CAN on when to make those phone calls. And then we heard from one of the other individuals who spoke about that the calls are made at the last moment or a few days before the discharge or coming out of the prison. Can you

speaking why are the CANs giving that timeline, and can that be improved?

RICHARD CHO: So, there're two reasons why they've set those timelines. First of all, it's very difficult for the Coordinated Access Networks to be able to anticipate what housing will be available six months from now. So, I mean, you can't line up a landlord and say, you know, "Will you have this apartment available six months from now and then there's somebody who's going to be coming out, and people's discharge dates from COD are unpredictable. That's number one.

Number two, the reason why a lot of them say you can't call any more than 48 hours before discharge -- we fully realize this is completely unrealistic -- is the Coordinated Access Networks' local regions set their policy around that, and they do that as a way to manage how much inflow they're getting because they're already flooded with so many CAN appointments that they're trying to field, then for everybody who's coming out of the Department of Correction to be then dumped to the 2-1-1 system to have to field, it would be really difficult. So, they set those policies. Those are not good policies. I don't agree with having to limit the time, but I also don't think the solution is that the Department of Correction should dump onto the CAN system to solve the housing needs of people. We think that that's a responsibility that the State Department of Correction should have, but they don't actually have the resources to be able to provide housing assistance, and to be able to give them the resources and the tools and the accountability to do that, I think, is the better solution.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Could you share with us which other parts of the country have had similar laws and the results?

RICHARD CHO: So, other parts of the country have actually had Department of Correction, or in states where they have county jail systems, directly invest in housing to address the homelessness needs. This is not a unique problem to Connecticut. So, Ohio's Department of Correction actually has invested in creating housing in the community for people who are released from their custody. Los Angeles County has also used a flexible housing subsidy pool to create a program called Breaking Barriers, which is a rapid rehousing program for probationers who are released from LA County Jail and on probation. So, this is a model that has been successful all over the country, and I think, you know, Connecticut, I think, has the opportunity to follow suit and address what is essentially a fairly big challenge. It represents one-fifth of the homeless population in our state.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): The reason I'm going in this direction is I want to show if there is data available of the financial benefits to the state if we move in this direction, because our assumption is that the Department of Correction's budget is going to decrease because a certain population of individuals and the Department of Housing budget may decrease potentially, as well, if certain individuals we identify them early enough and not have them go through the returning-back-to-prison for shelter.

RICHARD CHO: Thank you, Senator. We could decrease our homeless population by 20 percent, one-fifth. We could cut it by one-fifth if we could

better address the housing needs of this population. So, the Department of Housing, which does fund some of the shelters in our state, would actually have less shelter demand collectively as a state, but similarly, you're talking about people who've been in and out of prisons over and over again. In fact, we have some data points where we've seen people call 2-1-1 that morning seeking shelter, and that afternoon, they're rearrested and convicted. So, this is a repeated cycle, and if you think about how much we're spending in taxpayer dollars to keep people incarcerated and have then wind up going back to prison, that is something that could be potentially quantified. I don't have those numbers off hand, but there's a potential savings here, but like any opportunity to save the state dollars, you need to make an up-front investment in order to actually keep people out of the prison system, and then you could see the down-the-road savings.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay, and the discharge planning checklist, and I think that's coming through the work that your organization has been doing at his time. And this gives a potential of identifying the risk of homelessness in inmates?

ROBERT CHO: Yeah, we're discussing two things with the Department of Corrections. One is to help train their personnel in how to do a very simple homelessness screener. It would be nine questions that ask about what their most recent housing status was, what their prior rental history was, whether they've been in a homeless shelter previously. In addition, we're exploring whether we can give them some view-only access to our Homelessness Administrative Data System so they could actually

look up inmates by name to find out had they been in a shelter prior to their incarceration, and, so, that would be a way for them to identify which of the inmates who are being released have prior homelessness histories and are very likely to return back to homelessness.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your testimony, and thank you for all the work that you and your organization and all your team does. It's amazing work. The more I learn about it, it amazes me. Thank you. Seeing no other questions, we will ask our next person on our list to come, John Souza. Thank you so much, Mr. Souza, and thank you for your patience today, a long day.

JOHN SOUZA: I'd say I get paid by the hour, but I don't. I make a living. John Souza, Connecticut Coalition of Property Owners. I volunteer as the president. I'm also a full-time landlord. I've been listening here for a couple hours, and it's very interesting conversations about a lot of things in housing. The Coalition has worked for many years to find practical solutions. I'm all about practical solutions that work for everybody, which makes sense. I'm just going to stress before I start that if we had thousands of empty units around the state of housing, like small affordable units, a lot of these problems would be solved. Right? Because people would take a lot more risk when they have an empty building or empty units and they want to rent them, as a practical point. So, for example, you were talking about the increase in the amount of security deposit. I've been able to get two months as a rental security deposit, and if somebody wanted to pay me three, and they were

marginal, I would say -- you know, I turn people down because of their credit. I would say, "Hey, I'm going to take a little more risk, but if you're willing to give me some more money to take that risk, I'll do it." So, that's just how I look at it, but if I had ten empty units and I had to rent it, I might say, "You know what, I'll take you no matter what because I just need somebody in there that has a decent job that'll probably pay me.

So, it is a supply and demand problem, number one. How do you solve that problem? I don't have a magic wand, but, you know, zoning changes, you know, ordinance changes in certain towns where you can only have so many people in an apartment. These big old houses in these towns -- if you could let, you know, six or seven people live in them instead of one family, you know, they might be better off. Everybody might be better off. So, these are just practical things that we can do.

As far as my testimony goes, let's go quick because there's a bunch of them here. The one for the change the locks. You know, we support that, in general speaking. We know this is a problem. We already deal with it. People break up, usually some kind of law enforcement's involved. There's paperwork, we change the locks. We're happy to do it because, you know, we don't want people fighting. Bad things can happen when people are arguing. I will say that locks, even if you change the lock, it doesn't solve the problem because if the person wants to get in there, a court order doesn't keep them out, and a lock's not going to keep them out either. They break the door, and that's just a practical. Landlords are happy to change the locks

for a nominal fee. If they're not around, like small landlords like us, we're not always, some of us work. You know, they're not going to be a full-time landlord. If they can't get somebody there, they're going to get someone there as fast as they can. I will say if you call a locksmith today on your phone, you can find two of them that'll be there within the hour to change your locks if it's really that desperate a situation. The tenant can pay for it if they feel really strongly about it, and if they can't afford it. You know, okay if they can't afford it, we'll help them out. We'll change it when we can get to it.

Lastly, I just want to oppose 5241. That's the one that's the rental certificates of occupancy. There's already a tremendous amount of inspections that happen in housing every year. Every town has the ability to inspect. Hartford just came up with a new ordinance. I worked with Brandon to -- you know, I understand that there's not great landlords, and there's lots of great landlords out there. And they have the ability -- every town has the ability to do it themselves. But stopping the flow of the money is the big problem. You know, if you want to have a bank to loan you money to build housing or to keep the housing going, they need to be sure that they can have a constant flow of income. That's the most important thing. Obviously, landlords are -- you know, between Section 8, you get a housing inspection every year. If you have rooming houses, they come every year. Your insurance company wants to come to your housing every year almost. It's never-ending inspections. If tenants have problems, they can go to any housing department. They'll do an inspection. They can go to the State Summary

Process Court and file their rent there to get it resolved. It doesn't automatically become, you know, they have to pay no matter what. They could pay the rent into court already if there are issues. I'm sorry, all additional costs will transfer to higher rents at some point; that's the point to understand. We're trying. We want to supply the housing; believe me, we do. But it's getting harder and harder, more regulations, more everything. That was quick. I was trying to get it into three minutes [Crosstalk]

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your testimony. We appreciate it, and it's a valuable perspective that we have to take into account, as well. Thank you. Seeing no questions. Thank yo so much for your testimony. And next is Rafael Ramos. I think Mr. Ramos is not here. We'll move onto the next person on our list, Lucy Nolan. Thank you so much for your patience today, and thank you for being here.

LUCY NOLAN: Thank you. I was going back and forth between two rooms. Good afternoon, Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, members of the Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan, and I am the Director of Policy and Public Relations for the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence. We are a statewide coalition of Connecticut's nine community-based sexual assault crisis services.

I'm here today in support of raised Bill 5244 - AN ACT CONCERNING ADDITIONAL HOUSING PROTECTIONS FOR VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT. I'm going to focus my testimony on the need for this legislation as it pertains to protection orders; however, we fully support both for restraining and

foreign orders of protection. So, a civil protection order is not dependent on a criminal charge but is obtained by an individual who has been a victim of stalking, sexual abuse, or sexual assault. The accused does not have to be a family member in order for the victim to receive this type of order, and the order typically lasts for one year. One out of every six women and one in 33 men have been a victim or an attempted victim of an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime. Eight out of ten of these people know their assailant; so, this is why this is such an important bill to be able to ask to get the locks changed once the order is in. And, so, you know, for someone to go to court, apply, receive the civil protection order, there has to be real danger. So, it isn't just something that somebody wants to get their locks changed and kick the person out. They have to really prove that there's some danger.

We do have two suggestions to make this legislation stronger. On line 17 and line 30, it refers to the landlord and the tenant both having two days, and we'd like, if you could, change that to 48 hours just because that takes care of holidays and weekends, and this is a very, very tense time for people who've gotten these orders, and, so, the quicker we can get the locks changed, is the best. And this really -- I think this is a great bill. We did a lot of work with it with CCADV and with legal services and with landlords, as well, to figure out what's the fairest way to deal with this, and, so, I believe this is a great bill; so, I hope you'll pass it. Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your testimony, and thank you for all the work that you and your organization do, as it's important. Somebody had raised this point, I think Representative Dauphinais, hat sometimes you don't have to change the lock. There are digital numbers, and you can change that, and then that should be reasonably acceptable.

LUCY NOLAN: Yes.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): And the other thing that was brought up earlier was that sometimes there are locksmiths who can be available on-line, and people can get that, as well, but I think you're putting the onus on the homeowners or landlords. So, the landlord -- if the landlord chooses not to do it within the, it says they have six hours, and if they say "no" you go do it, then it's on the tenant, but the tenant pays for it.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay. Any questions or comments. Seeing none. Thank you so much for your testimony. Thank you, and thank you for waiting. Next, is Richard Porth with United Way/2-1-1. Thank you, Rick, and thank you for being here and the work you do.

RICHARD PORTH: I appreciate chance to come and present this testimony, and it's related to S.B. 183, AN ACT CONCERNING THE COST OF 2-1-1 FOR LIFELINE PROGRAM CELLULAR TELEPHONE CUSTOMERS. I mostly want to say thank you on behalf of 2-1-1, and I'm glad that a few of our partners have already expressed support for this, as well. My testimony which has been provided gives more information on how the whole LifeLine system works. You had asked

last week if we could quantify the number of people who call us using LifeLine phones, and what we learned over the past week is that it's really a hard number to derive. What we can tell you is that callers to 2-1-1, about 55 percent of our callers are low-income, and by that we mean 200 percent of the federal poverty level or lower. And then nationally, the best estimate we could see is that about 50 to 60 percent of people who are eligible by income to get the LifeLine phones actually have them. And so that gives at least an order of magnitude for the State of Connecticut.

I think it is important to point out that the LifeLine program was started under President Reagan, and it was updated to include cell phones under George W. Bush's administration. Currently in Connecticut, there are six providers, and most of the providers provide 1000 minutes of talk and text per month. It's not taxpayer funded. The LifeLine phones are paid for nationally through the surcharge on people's phone bills, which is then distributed through the Federal Communications Commission. This is actually an FCC program. It's administered by the FCC and paid for with those user fees on phone bills. You can see in the testimony the guidelines for eligibility. Again, it's 135 percent of the federal poverty level or participation in SNAP or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, Federal Housing, Public Housing Assistance, Tribal Programs, and Veterans Pension and Survivor Benefits.

We really do appreciate that the Committee, Senator Anwar and Representative McGee and members of the Committee have raised this bill. We do believe it

could make a difference for people who are trying to get into the system.

If I could say one other quick thing. It's not in my formal testimony, but I also would like to support H.B. 5242 having to do with people being released from custody, and we know that that's a -- while we've made progress through the state's Coordinated Access System, we know we have to do better for people leaving incarceration. And I think we will do anything in 2-1-1 to support that, and we do believe, as some earlier folks have said, that interventions upstream through the Department of Correction with the right resources are a big part of the solution, and it doesn't have to start with a call to 2-1-1. It could begin much earlier than that based on what DOC and CCEH and others have been working on. So, we want to support that, as well, and we're happy to help in whatever solutions come out of that process. Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, again, for your testimony, and thank you for being there. Any organization that's fielding 80,000 phone calls just and just alone for housing and security is doing an amazing and important work. So, I know sometimes the parts of the story that -- the things when they don't go well only that makes the news and perspectives and that at times it's almost unfair to what the 2-1-1 and the United Way do, but 80,000 phone calls and then we don't even talk about the other phone calls which include suicide prevention at the current times, and so thank you for everyone who works there, and then we want to make sure that you guys continue to do the work you're doing but be able to enhance it and not have to use your

resources for raising funds and looking about sustainability in some respects. So, that's specifically for housing-related issues.

And, again, on 524, I sometimes wonder should there be a CAN system within the existing facilities. Rather than calling 2-1-1, can they do it internally to be able to address this, and I think we're moving in some of those directions by advancing our pre-discharge information about the individuals and the risk stratification.

RICHARD PORTH: I think that's a really important distinction, and that discussion, you as leaders of the Housing Committee advanced that discussion tremendously over the last few months, and what I would say is that the system that has been set up for coordinated access is a crisis response system primarily. It is designed that way, and all of us, partners in this, many state agencies and nonprofits, have made real progress in that. But people leaving incarceration or people who are unsheltered need much more in the way of upstream prevention work. And, again, 2-1-1 wants to be part of the solution, but it does not have to start with contact with 2-1-1 or a call to 2-1-1. Hopefully, it would start six months out or so in the Correction facility or in the community where those issues could be addressed, frankly, in a more productive way.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you again. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mister Chair. Thank you for being here and sticking it out with everybody. So, you're the CEO of United Way

Connecticut. Could you share with me what the structures United Way? We have United Way of Coastal Connecticut, and are you related hierarchal? Could you explain a little bit your structure?

RICHARD PORTH: Sure. There are 16 United Ways in Connecticut; 15 of them are traditional local United Ways including Coastal Fairfield County, and 14 others. United Way of Connecticut is the state association for the local United Ways, but, honestly, Senator, mostly what we do is work in partnership with the state government and a lot of nonprofits on things like homelessness prevention, Mobile Crisis for youth, Birth to Three, and many other programs, as well. What United Way of Connecticut primarily does is service delivery through our contact centers and our helping people access health and human services through the 2-1-1 process.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you for that clarification. So, the United Way of Coastal Connecticut, even though we identify with them as part of the 2-1-1 program, it's actually your organization, one out of 16, but you're primary focus is to administer the 2-1-1 program. That's what the United Way of Connecticut is predominantly. You're the switchboard, so to speak, that manages the 2-1-1 program. Would that be correct?

RICHARD PORTH: We've moved away from being the switchboard. There was a time when everybody got help from 2-1-1 here and across the whole country, by the way, in every state by using a telephone. The people we're talking about today for this bill are still using telephones, but the vast majority of people who get help from us now do it on-line or

they can do it through chat or texting or going to our websites. Last year we registered over two million visits to our various websites for people looking for health and human services and trying to access health and human services in this state.

So, I'll just say one other thing about our relationship to the local United Ways. They do chip in for 2-1-1, and that's an important -- you know, it's an important part of our work. But we are absolutely independent -- all 16 of us -- from each other, and so there's no hierarchical relationship there.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you for that clarification. So the 2-1-1 program is managed and kind of the brain child of the United Way of Connecticut, and you raise funds and necessary operational to maintain it. Would that be correct? Do you get state funds or federal funds?

RICHARD PORTH: We do get state funds and some federal funds, as well, and those local United Ways chip in for 2-1-1, also.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Is it only for housing, or, as I've heard from other, it's also used for mental health, suicide prevention support. Would that be correct, what 2-1-1 is interpreted for? It's more than just housing. Is that correct?

RICHARD PORTH: I appreciate the question, and it is more than just housing. The most prevalent and the most common reason that people call us is for housing. As Senator Anwar said last year, we recorded, I think, close to 85,000 calls related to housing, but we also get many calls for financial assistance, suicide prevention calls, Mobile Crisis

for youth, utility payment. People who are afraid that their utilities are going to be shut off. Mental Health, regular healthcare calls. It runs the gamut. Last year we recorded 260,000 calls from people in every city and town in the state, looking for everything from A to Z. We've helped to access all those different things. Out of that number of calls, about 45 percent of them were crisis intervention calls. In other words, when people dial the Suicide Prevention Line, they're usually talking to people in the 2-1-1 contact center, and we help people with that, as well. We work with the state Unified Command Structure after big storms or after the Newtown disaster to help people who were either trying to get supports related to those things or to provide help, to offer help, to donate help.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Well, I appreciate hearing that because obviously this is the Housing Committee, and we're looking at the important role you have in that, but, as I explored into the 2-1-1, I was literally amazed at the wide range of services that you all provide. So, I want to thank you, and I hope that you make time to our Appropriations Committee to let them know all the good work that you all do. So, thank you, Mister Chair.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Senator Hwang, and seeing no other comments, thank you so much, Rick, thank you. Thank you for your time today.

RICHARD PORTH: Thank you. I appreciate it.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Next is Sarah Fox, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. Thank you for your patience, Sarah, and thank you for being here.

SARAH FOX: And thank you for brining life back to these Committee hearings. I mean, they're really something. [Laughter] So, Sarah Fox, Director of Advocacy and Community Impact for the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. I'm here today to just echo so much of what my colleagues have said before and what Richard said about H.B. 5242, and really the importance of figuring out a better system for individuals who are returning home and who are returning home homeless.

So, Richard really touched on the contents and the program between for H.B. 5242. I'm a little sleep-deprived; I have a newborn, so just bear with me. But I wanted to just sort of hit home on what the data is and what it tells us. And I wanted it to be on record because it's so important, and it's happening in every community across the state. We know that some of our cities are disproportionately impacted, but everywhere across the state, people who are justice-impacted are having a real problem accessing housing, and oftentimes those same individuals who are returning home, they're calling to 2-1-1; 2-1-1 is doing their best, but they're coming home, and they may be on the Green, they may be in parks, they might be sleeping outside, they could be in cars, but they're having problems accessing housing.

And we have data not that really illuminates this issue and illuminates in a way that sort of, like, it just shows how bad and how terrible this situation is. So, if you want to, there're a lot of colorful charts included in my testimony. I don't know if you have it in front of you, but I just want to call forward to some of the key points that, you

know, are sticking with me and are driving my work while I am very sleep-deprived, and they illuminate this crisis. We did a data match with the Department of Correction and our Homeless Management Information System, and it showed that there are 8,187, which is 48 percent of those who use shelter between 2016 and 2019, also had a DOC record. Twenty-one percent of those were released from the Department of Correction within the last three years. So, this really speaks to what Richard was getting at, which is this is a huge -- it's one-fifth of our homeless population.

You can see that people are cycling between pretrial, and a large amount of people are coming out who are end of sentence and have no program or oversight from either Judicial or the Department of Correction, and they basically are legislated into homelessness. Many individuals are just cycling between homelessness and the Judicial and Correction system, and oftentimes what we know is it begins early in life, and it just continues, and that's the trajectory that they're taking.

You asked earlier, and I'll just sort of close on this. So, you have all the data; it's here. We will provide you with whatever data you need, but this sort of starts to flesh out the scope of the issue and the crisis that we're facing today. But you asked Richard, in particular, about the cost of the program that we're talking about where the Department of Correction and court support services begin to -- you know, there's some kind of a program that could take place to help relieve some of the stress on the homelessness response system, and what the impact of that program would be. We think that

if we could be funded at three million dollars per year with the cost per person of \$7600, the Department of Correction could serve 400 individuals per year, which would enable them to bring the number of people who experience post-incarceration from 1200 to zero within three years. So, we're seeing, and you heard from Jason and Roche from Columbus House just last week, who --

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Could you just repeat that, sorry? Repeat that.

SARAH FOX: So, for \$3 million dollars, because this is the Rapid Rehousing, the Light Touch program that Columbus House. It's the pilot you learned about last week at last week's Housing Committee that Jason and Roche testified on. For \$7600 dollars which is the cost of that Light Touch housing, which is really effective, the Department of Correction and potentially Probation, which we would like to see this expanded to, could serve 400 individuals per year, which would enable us to drop this number from 1200 individuals to zero within three years. And that a type of impact that could have real change and a real cost savings for the State of Connecticut but improve both public safety and outcomes for people who are just cycling in and out of incarceration.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much. Thank you, this is amazing. I mean, I've obviously invested some time in this, but the more I learn about this, the more impressive the numbers are, the more impressive the opportunity is. I need your help to get the stories and these numbers out because I know the legislators that we are here in the housing, we see this, and, hopefully, we are moved by this, most

of us, and all of us would be moved by this to make some real good choices going forward. But for the people who need convincing and who have, for lack of a better word, the stereotype in their mind, how do we get to them, and what can be done to help them be better educated, and I think that's going to be our challenge. I think this is going to go through the Committee. Hopefully, this Committee is strong enough and understands the value of these perspectives that will get this out of the Committee, but the next step is going to be our area of opportunity to figure out how do we get this message to our legislators and hear and see these stories directly.

SARAH FOX: Well, we've been conducting tours at Columbus House. We're going to be doing another one with Court Support Services Division and with DOC. That's a way to sort of see this program in action. Just a couple weeks ago, we had a tour, and Representative Walker and Representative Porter were there, and they got to see, and Omena McCoy who was with Senator Winfield got to see the program in action. And, honestly, you know, we spoke with a guy who was here, it was Roche, and you know, he has been through the cycle nine times, and this was his last time, and, you know, last week we sat outside and we talked, and he just said, you know, he now has hope. He is starting to reconnect with his family, and without this, he knows -- without this housing, he would be back, and he'd be incarcerated again, and this is his last shot at trying to sort of stay in a home, and he's stable for the first time in his life. So, you know, this is what we're hearing, and we want to make sure that everyone

knows that stable, healthy homes make a big difference for everyone.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): And through this conversation we are having, I would probably say, if I were to bring five of my Senators and then maybe Senator Hwang, you can bring five of our Senators from your perspective to learn about this and invest a little bit more time in this issue which is truly holding our state back. It would be an area to humanize the issue and when we say "yes," it comes with a conviction and pride, and if we say "no," -- God forbid, we do it with at least having the opportunity to invest more time in it. I think it's worthy to look at it; we just can't keep going in the same direction and expect different results, and the numbers are speaking quite loudly now, so this would become an important issue. And then maybe our representatives can do something similar, as well, to try. Because this becomes a responsibility. We are losing more money from the state by not addressing this challenge. I'll seek anyone who wants. Yes, Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mister Chair. I can only speak for myself, so consider that, but I would also offer I appreciate your comment in regard to the energy and engagement, and it speaks well of the collaboration and the work dynamics between the Chairs. We do care deeply about finding solutions and engaging all the shareholders. So, I take that compliment as one we're lively, right?

SARAH FOX: Oh, definitely.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): But that being said, and it's important, your numbers are startling. And I guess

my question is where is the engagement of the Department of Correction in that pathway in the bridge to being able to have that communications and have that kind of pipeline for people when they're first coming out, to be able to have resources so people don't fall through the cracks.

SARAH FOX: Well, so where are they in terms of like where are they at in their thinking or where are they at in this process with us?

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Where are they in their engagement with you? The organizations that are out there, the reentry that are doing the yeoman's work. Where is the connectedness to be sure that this transition is seamless and that people don't fall through the cracks? Is there a process, and if there is, does it need to be better?

SARAH FOX: Well, so, I will say that we've been working closely with the Department of Correction and Judicial and Court Support Services Division for many years now on sort of trying to figure this process out. We've been working through the Reaching Home campaign at CCEH, as well, and today, you know, we're meeting with both the Commissioner and, you know, we've been meeting with Commissioner Cook, also with Gary Roberge from Court Support Services Division. They're both -- well, I can say that, you know, you heard from DOC today that they're in support of this.

We're talking about assessing individuals and having a common screener so that people are assessed earlier. They've done a ton of work in terms -- and most recently with the reentry counselors, understanding what the challenges are for people and

starting to have conversations and screening them to find out if they're experiencing homelessness early on into coming into the Department of Correction's custody. They're also working and trying to partner with our community providers to figure out what better exit strategies we could have. Court Support Services Division has played a vital role in launching this small pilot, but oftentimes this is more about resources and the dollars that we're putting toward outcomes because I know, and I truly believe, that both CSSD and the Department of Correction are vested in a positive solution, and they're working with us very collaboratively.

But this \$3 million dollars that we're talking about, that's the cost that oftentimes no one wants to pay. And, so, it oftentimes what we face in our homelessness response system where we working and we're not asking for more because it's really hard to do that in this budget climate. But for a light investment up front, and one of the individuals who came to testify spoke so eloquently about this earlier, you know, if we are more proactive in our approach, and we're working with DOC and CSSD to be so, we could make such a better impact, but because of the dollars and the cost of any program, that's where we lack traction. And, so, we have to figure out how to pay for even \$3 million dollars which could have a huge impact. Because we're assessing we have much better data over the past few years, and that's truly based on this collaboration. But now we need the funding to actually pay for programs to have better outcomes for people.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): So what you're saying is even if this bill comes out of the Committee, it's going to have to go to Appropriations.

SARAH FOX: Yeah, I mean we could have the part of bill in terms of the screening tool and screening for people, and we are working with the Department of Correction. We just had a conversation yesterday about training, probation, the reentry counselors, and parole having diversion conversations which is a technique and a strategy we use in our Homelessness Response System to do problem-solving conversations and help people who are returning to better understand their housing options. So, we're going to be doing those trainings. We've been doing those trainings with Probation. So, we can do all of that, but, yes, ultimately this is something that -- this is a bill that will need -- we can do one part of the bill without a fiscal note, but the other parts will definitely need to go before Appropriations.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Well, thank you for your work and congratulations on the baby; that's wonderful news. You'll get some rest, right? Thank you very much, Mister Chair.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much. The good news is if you keep doing what you're doing, the baby will be in a better place in the world. You're making the world a better place every day. So, with that, seeing none, thank you so much for your testimony. Next is Love Austin, not here. And Erin Boggs; I think Erin was here a little bit ago, so she may be back in a bit. Liza Ramos. Hi, Liza. Thank you so much for your patience today, and thank you for being here.

LIZA RAMOS: Good afternoon. My name is Liza Ramos, and I'm here to speak on behalf of myself and other women that are recently released from York Correction Institution. Upon my release from York Correctional Institution, it has not been easy, I'm not going to lie. I had to support from the halfway house, and, honestly, I can say that it was better off when I was in the halfway house. I complied with everything that they told me in the halfway house. I had a lot of support from the staff members. I got a job within two days of getting into the halfway house. They helped me get into the UPS warehouse.

Now that I'm home, being released, I'm not on parole or probation. I completed my entire sentence. So, with that being said, basically, they released me without any housing support. So, now I'm back into the community where I am in a situation where I am in Hartford, and I'm trying to establish myself better for my son, for my family. I'm an Air Force daughter. My father is Henry Ramos. He's a Vietnam Vet, and I would like to reestablish my life and go back to school eventually and make my son be proud, but it's not easy when you're being released without the proper housing. So, I'm here to advocate for myself and other women that I met in the halfway house and in prison, as well.

So, I just think that if we had a little bit more support, if you're not on parole or probation and you finish your sentence, you can better yourself better. If you get put back into the same environment, you're probably going to do the same things and be around the same people, which I'm trying to change that whole situation so when my son

sees me, he sees his mother a little bit different. So, like, Senator Hwang said earlier, I would like to leave my son with something when I eventually leave whenever that is, and I would like to make God, myself, and my family proud. I think -- I'm just speaking for myself and for the other women that're leaving York Correctional Institution. And I thank you for this opportunity to speak right now. And I have support from the [inaudible-04:36:49] Center, InterCommunity, and CoWorx, and I'm thankful for them, as well.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much, Liza, for being here. Thank you for your testimony. So, how old is your son?

LIZA RAMOS: My son is going to be 17 years old.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): And how is he doing?

LIZA RAMOS: He's doing well. He's with the family, and I would like to get all my stuff put back in order from before I was in prison. I lived in West Hartford. I had a good job, and I'm trying to get back to that, but it hasn't been easy because I finished my -- the judge gave me a good offer, and he said he would get me off of the probation, and I'm trying to get all that back, but it has not been easy, to be honest with you. But I have support from the community, but I think that without the housing that you need, it makes it a lot harder, and that's why I'm here to support the bill 5242.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much. Your testimony is of great value to us. Thank you. Seeing no questions, thank you for your testimony. We'll move on to Erin Boggs who is now available.

Thank you. Thank you, Erin, for being here, and thank you for your patience today.

ERIN BOGGS: Thank you to the leadership and members of the Housing Committee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Erin Boggs. I'm the Executive Director of Open Communities Alliance. We're a civil rights nonprofit organization that promotes equitable access to housing across the state. I'm here today to support Senate Bill 188 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE HEALTHY HOUSING ASSISTANCE PILOT PROGRAM, a proposal designed to produce health improvements in low-income children with asthma, broaden housing choices for such families, tackle the extraordinarily high levels of segregation in the state-funded rental assistance program while strategically expanding it, and this proposal will also address the fact that Connecticut is one of the most segregated states in the country.

What we have developed in the Healthy Housing Voucher proposal that is embodied in 188 has come along with help from a team of experts including a preeminent doctor at Johns Hopkins who has studied health and housing, the head of the Pulmonary Care Unit at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, a doctor at a local health clinic in Asylum Hill here in Hartford, and the Health Disparities Institute affiliated with UConn. What this program proposes is a set of new vouchers that would be in a sense prescribed by doctors to families who have kids with persistent asthma. And this is asthma that is making it difficult for children to go to school, making it difficult for parents to go to work, making it hard for children to perform everyday activities, exercise, etc.

With these vouchers, there would be a referral to the program, access to Mobility Counseling which already exists in Connecticut and is funded by the state, access to particular supports that would allow the costs to be cost-neutral for families such as moving expenses and security deposits. And then assistance with moving to areas where the conditions are such that the asthma is likely not to be triggered; it's like to ameliorate the children's asthma.

There have been studies recently, one that was in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* showing that moves like this make a huge difference in health outcomes for children and are a big cost savings. There are other studies that are showing these kinds of changes can be transformative to families who are low-income and are really one of the best ways that we have to break the cycle of poverty.

The last thing I'll say is that all of this, of course, should be done while making important strategic investments in places where asthma rates are high. We have some of those investments already in the form of Healthy Homes and Putting on Airs and a number of other programs. We're investing in housing in those areas, but we need to really be doing these two things together. Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you for your testimony, Erin. Are there any other bills you wanted to talk about, or this is the main one?

ERIN BOGGS: No, that's the only one for today. Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): So, I can tell you in my other life, I'm a pulmonologist, as well, and I this, and I literally at times see a situation where the moment a child is in an environment, it is determining the trajectory of the rest of their life. And early intervention can truly change everything -- the ability to go to school, the ability to breathe, the other illnesses that they may develop including their BMI; their weight, if you will; being overweight and being on steroids; and then ability to focus; developing sleep apnea and other illnesses; then hypertension. It's an entire trajectory that that changes. This is very real, and the way we sometimes make decisions, we are making a decision in an immediate sense of how much dollar and cents in the budget it's going to be, and we do not look at the opportunity costs and the life impacted cost. And that is, unfortunately, a flaw in our budgeting at times because everybody's looking at very short-term numbers, at the cost of long-term decisions which are poorly made.

I wish there was a way to address that, but I know one of the main things that's going to come in, and I think the Commissioner of Housing touched on this, was the cost issue around this. Is there a way we can actually help educate people who have cost concerns, about the savings aspect somehow? And I know that it is there for that, too.

ERIC BOGGS: Right. So, I've included some information in my testimony about cost savings. So, I think, you know, I encourage everyone to check that out. And I think that's really -- those are very conservative numbers that I'm pulling from, so I think -- and it's just about hospital savings and

just about what the tax revenue might be from this. What's not included it's hard to get a fixed figure on, you know, the savings because you will now have someone -- so, additional taxes because you'll have someone earning more money, or maybe someone won't go to prison, or maybe someone -- you know, I think there are all of these things that we know from the research are true but haven't exactly been quantified. So, I think that's out there.

The other thing to think about, and I would be happy to engage in some discussions with others around this is this isn't just a housing program, right? This is something that affects multiple departments. It could affect, you know, the Department of Public Health. It could affect DCF. It could affect DSS. So, whether this could be something that really cut across those silos and pulled on resources and contributions from across agencies is something that I'd be, you know, happy to look into and explore.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much again for your testimony and your work around this. Amazing work, as always. Any comments. Seeing none. Everybody's getting tired. [Laughter] Thank you for your testimony. Next is Greg Kirschner. Thank you, Mr. Kirschner. Sorry for your wait today and a long day, but thank you for being here and your patience. Thank you.

GREG KIRSCHNER: Thank you, Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, Senator Hwang, Representative Zullo. My name is Greg Kirschner. I'm the legal director at the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. I'm here to testify on two issues. First, Senate Bill 188, and I largely associate myself with the comments that Erin Boggs just made. I would just

add from our particular perspective of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center that one of the key attributes with housing vouchers is that they're supposed to be a benefit to the state, which is desegregating effect, promoting integration. Oftentimes that is not well served because tenants do not have the assistance to overcome barriers to finding housing outside of places that they've traditionally lived.

So, for example, even when housing was shut down in Hartford due to a terrible landlord losing an in-place subsidy from HUD, many of the tenants who got portable vouchers wound up living on the same block in the same neighborhoods because there are tremendous barriers, and even with so-called Mobility Counseling, they are funneled down the path of least resistance. And many of these tenants and many of our clients struggle with issues around asthma and health impacts of substandard housing. So, this is in important bill and may be a model for how the state can better run the RAP Program in order to ensure that people can make integrated moves.

Secondly, I hadn't actually planned to talk about this, but Senate Bill 185, I heard testimony earlier today, and it raised a lot of concerns for me. What primarily the concern is, is that community residences already have a very difficult time operating in the State of Connecticut even with the protections in place. I think making changes to 8-3e, particularly in response very specific issues with a very specific operator or location is not, I think, the best way to approach it. Particularly,

where as much as I can gather, 8-3e does not even seem to be in play with this particular place.

What I did find very valuable was hearing from the family who was concerned about not being able to leave their home to their child to live in as a group home. But it seems a little counterintuitive to say that we should limit community residences in 8-3e as a response to that. The real issue is 19a-507b which purports to limit group homes to less than 0.1 percent of the population of a town and to require 1000 feet spacing. Both of those are probably, almost undoubtedly unconstitutional anyway, and those are the impediments to operating group homes. So, this family that testified today, even if they were to stop this Newport Academy, there's no reason why someone else down the block, across the street, 1000 feet away couldn't open a group home for their autistic child and then keep them from being able to turn their home into a group home in the future.

So, really I think the issue is that 19a-507b's restrictions are what needs to go, and we need to be more promotive of community residences rather than looking at restricting them further, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Yes, I'm sure there will be some questions, and before Senator Hwang asks those questions, maybe I can. So, I think in our conversation earlier on 185, it was clear that there people were using the zoning laws -- abusing is probably a better word, for their financial gains. And because of the vagueness in some respects on how the definitions are interpreted and we're trying to clean that up. And then one of the conversations I

had or a comment I made was that my fear is that we don't want to harm the real beneficiaries across the state for some individuals or groups that are using or abusing it.

So, what I heard from you is a little different, and what you're saying is that those people who are abusing this, they can be stopped without changing the law. Is that what you're suggesting?

GREG KIRSCHNER: Well, just from a little bit of digging while I was here today, it seems like 8-3e is not even an issue in the Fairfield conflict over Newport, and, so, I'm not sure why amending 8-3e would be a response to that. I think, in general, I think I have a little bit of a different perspective too. I don't know that even this instance is an example of someone abusing the system. I heard a lot of complaints about that it was expensive and that it was providing things like equestrian and yoga. I'm not sure why there should be a dollar limit or a benefit limit on what services people with disabilities get. If people can afford to provide their child with super-fantastic rehabilitation services to help them with their addiction services, I'm not sure why that's objectionable by itself. I suppose in a societal view, we would like to have everyone to have really excellent rehabilitation services, but it leaves me a little bit puzzled as to why it's objectionable for people to be able to pay for those things for their children if they can. But in answer to your question, I don't think there's any evidence of 8-3e being abused in any way across the state. It's a pretty narrow set of provisions that are commonly

used by your well-established DMHAS and other funded providers, by other licensed providers.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay, I'll probably ask more questions. I'll have Senator Hwang ask some questions, but I'm getting confused. Thank you. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mister Chair. Thank you, Mr. Kirschner, for staying, and did you submit testimony that related to what you just shared?

GREG KIRSCHNER: I believe that some brief testimony was submitted while I was here, but I'm sure you haven't gotten it yet.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Okay, so you did submit your testimony and your thoughts in writing?

GREG KIRSCHNER: Just a very brief testimony.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Because I just want to be able to make sure I have that as a point of reference. I think the first thing you said quite clearly is the distinction between legal residences. That's the key point that was raised in the debate earlier is we have no problem whatsoever in protecting the intent of group homes and the intent of 8-3e because it was a group home and a residence. The difference that we are articulating is nowhere is that a residence in the organizations in question.

Number two, as a point of clarification, and you actually helped me in this, is the fact that you talked about entities in regard to DMHAS, Medicaid, or any other insurance-related products. If we don't change a bit of 8-3e, the current definition

in support of group homes and those that get their services and a payment model that utilizes a wide range of insurance products would preclude the applicant in using the group home exemption that you articulated in Fairfield.

Number three, far more important is this is not a local issue, and I'm looking in your background, your well-versed legal background, litigations. I think it's important to understand that the distinction of using the exemption of federal protection at the expense of the very people that you have heard that are looking to protect them is what is so frustrating about this. I would welcome a debate on that, and, in fact, as I've shared with you these three particular points, I would be very interested in hearing your response to them.

GREG KIRSCHNER: Well, I think, in general, I guess conceptually you need to think about it in a little bit of a different way. So, 8-3e creates a specific exemption for a subgroup of group homes referred to as community residences. There is also something in there about child care residences. Setting that aside, group homes have a right to operate and a right to be in residential neighborhoods by virtue of the fair housing act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. So, even if 8-3e didn't exist, they would still be entitled to zoning relief to operate. So, I'm not in a position to opine in great depth about this particular Newport Academy, I think it's called. I'm not overly familiar with it other than what I heard today and did a little bit of reading on. It doesn't sound to me like they are trying to use 8-3e because they are not funded by DMHAS, they're not licensed under the provisions

there, and they're not a child care group home. So, that's what left me puzzled about why that seemed to be the impetus for amending 8-3e.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): I appreciate your legal analysis of it because that's exactly what the said organization used in their application to the town bodies in order to get the exemption, in order to get their applications approved by local town bodies. So, I really appreciate your legal clarification because that has been the frustration point. It has nothing to do with 8-3e, but, nevertheless, there are court documents, there are application documents in which the said organization used 8-3e as a justification for their exemption.

So, I'm glad that you stayed, and I'm glad you did a quick research, and you did, in some ways, confuse the Chairman because of the articulation, but I hope to be able to clarify the frustration of people in addressing this issue, as you're absolutely right -- the application that's been put forth has nothing to do with 8-3e. It doesn't qualify under it, then why did it. And that's my frustration when I talk about the protected class that statutorily may be protected on Fair Housing and to fulfill the need to be sure that every individual has an opportunity to live in any community, okay? But the bottom line is, you said it best, better than anybody else could have said, and I'm glad you stayed -- is the fact it has nothing to do with 8-3e, and it should not even be made under an application of that.

GREG KIRSCHNER: Well, Senator, I would say I would not cite my testimony as being a reliable source for anything since I actually had never seen the applications or don't know anything of what was in

their applications. But I think the larger point is that -- so what remains troubling to me is that if this application does not fall under 8-3e, why is it prompting the amendment of 8-3e? And, you know, for me, I certainly empathize with the folks who are concerned about whether they're going to be able to use their family home as a group home in the future, but that it's really the unconstitutional restrictions in 19-507b that are going to be the problem for them, not 8-3e of any other protections that are afforded to group homes.

And, I think, you know, in the other research that I did as I was reading about this, the newspaper article, and I have to take it on face value because I wasn't there and haven't been able to look at it, said that when the public was testifying against its zoning, they testified about being concerned about traffic, noise, safety, and impact on their neighborhood, and those are all traditional issues that come up with many of my clients, you know, nonprofit organizations with long histories of working with the state, being funded with the state, but being confronted with angry neighbors. We had a provider who the mayor, who supported the neighbors against operating a group home in their town, refer to the neighbors at a public meeting as being an angry mob. So, full recognition of what was going on and the things that were happening. We have, you know, providers. We are in court right now with two towns who have tried to block, and successfully blocked, the operation of group homes under DMHAS contract, under state contract.

So, it's not that this is happening in a vacuum, that there's welcoming environment in the state for

group homes in residential communities, particularly in wealthy and suburban residential communities. So, that's what raised my alarm that there's going to be a reopening of 8-3e because of this particular issue.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): I appreciate your viewpoints, and you do have the battle scars from communities that have been opposing group homes. I know it exists. I can share with you that I've been fully supportive from my experiences and learning from the great work of Ability Beyond, the Kennedy Center; they're an essential part of the community. That being said, but you can't have it both ways, Mr. Kirschner. You can't say that the comments that you made as part of a testimony shouldn't be used as a basis of a record because you offer quick anecdotal observations, and you use your expertise to offer it as testimony. So, you can't have it both ways from a standpoint. If you didn't know enough about the details of the case, you can't simply be reading an op-ed and then offering, based upon your personal experiences, without the details of it. So, I want to be able to share that as you, as I think after you studied the case and understood a little bit more in a vacuum without your past experiences of potential bias or objections, you will see and understand that this is a model that is worthy of a challenge. This is a model that does not fit under 8-3e. And I would welcome that exchange with you anytime afterwards, but you cannot come before this Committee and make a testimony and make a statement and then back away from it and say, "I don't know the legal merits of it." You can't have it both ways, Sir.

GREG KIRSCHNER: Well, respectfully --

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): I need to interject for a little bit. I would just say that anybody can come and speak anytime about anything, and I mean we may or may not agree with it, but we've welcomed people from all different backgrounds; I'm just saying. Sorry, please continue.

GREG KIRSCHNER: Sure, I think my comment about not relying on my testimony is that it has zero value, say, if you're going to cite it for someone, not that I'm backing away from what I said. And to clarify, it wasn't an op-ed, it was a news article that reported the comments of the community members in opposition to the group home. So, you know, I if you're saying that the application cited 8-3e, I have to take you at your word. I have no idea; I haven't seen the application. My reading of the news reports is that it seems like this is not an 8-3e issue, and 8-3e is not really at play, again leading to my puzzlement as to why it's being used as a basis to amend 8-3e which is an important and valuable statute and should only be touched very carefully and after a lot of study.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): I completely agree with you about that. It is an important statute. It protects an incredibly important group that is important to me. And I do want to offer that I appreciate. I'm really glad that you chose to kind of scratch up some comments and offer it because it is fodder for a conversation. It allows us to probe a little bit deeper and ask in this Committee and ask in this broader community to not just take the superficial observations and particular experiences and biases and presume that it is intended to

exclude and be negative or biased against a protected group. I think if you delve a little bit deeper, and I hope you will, and I hope your words have great value and measure in this Committee that before you make such comments that you weigh them and know the facts before you make those statements. That's what I'm saying. With all due respect, for you to make a weighted statement, and if nobody is here to challenge on that, that has a weight of your experience and your thoughts without contesting, where you just acknowledge you didn't know the basis of it. It was predicated based upon what you just read. You did not know about the particular local case work, and for you to make a comment, and if nobody was here to challenge that, it an important responsibility that you have to take when you submit testimony and speak in a public forum that is of legal record.

GREG KIRSCHNER: Well, I can say, for instance, I was here this morning when I heard people testifying from the town of Fairfield that the town approached this provider and said, "We'd be happy to coordinate having you do this in another part of town in a more commercial area." And I can say from my experience and from, you know, significant case law across the country that that sort of response or approach if prima facie evidence of discriminatory animus towards the property because you're saying not -- it's literally saying, "Not in my yard, not in this neighborhood, not in this residential neighborhood." So, you know, I don't know what's in those people's hearts. I don't know what's in that application that was submitted, but I did witness those statements today, presented as an explanation or justification that they are not opposed to recovery

houses, but, in fact, that is actually sort of traditional classic responses of wanting to say, "We support recovery, we support these types of homes, but not in this spot, in another spot."

And, again, as I said I think this is an important discussion, and I really do feel for the family that seems to be -- wasn't able to be here today, but the letter was read. And their concerns are absolutely justified about not being able to provide for their child when they're gone. That's a huge problem in Connecticut. That's a huge problem for people with disabilities. But that problem was not located in 8-3e, and it doesn't have anything to do, I think, with the Newport Academy. It has to do with these restrictions that continue to exist on the number of group homes that are permitted or that the number of group homes that towns are allowed to limit based upon this arbitrary number in the statute. So, I think that's really a valuable conversation, and it's great that that family has brought that forward because I think it required attention.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): It now only includes that family; it included every family that struggles from substance abuse, mental health, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities -- all the protected classes we're talking about. It's not just one family. And the bottom line is, we are having a lively engagement, but I would offer that please do not assign intentions of people without being in their shoes, and I think that's the struggle we have when we have this engagement. And I have great admiration in working with my colleagues here with their various backgrounds and their passions. But I find it very frustrating that

we would offer viewpoints without understanding the completeness of the case, and that's the frustration I have. So, I welcome the conversation further. I would welcome if you would did a little deeper into this said case, and I would welcome your thoughts on that. But, nevertheless, I felt it was important to make sure it's a clarification and for you not to assign intent on people that are standing up and offering, I thought, a very articulate, as well as sound, argument in this case and not assign it to their motives. So, I want to thank the Chair for their indulgence. I appreciate your comments and thoughts, and I look forward to talking to you further. Thank you.

GREG KIRSCHNER: Thank you.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I just want to say thank you for your perspective on it. I don't think I could have articulated it the way you have with respect to the testimony that was given earlier today, some six hours ago, I guess. It was so long ago. But, I would appreciate more of this discussion just from your perspective, your background, and also for the many communities that you represent who are unable to represent themselves. So, I just wanted to say that for the record, and I would also encourage you to submit some information to us because I think there is another side to this argument, and I think you've elevated that very well. So, I look forward to talking with you, as well, on this particular matter and appreciate you bringing that forward. Thank you.

GREG KIRSCHNER: Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you, Mister Chair. Thank you again for your testimony, and looking forward to more information. I remain open-minded to learn, listen, and do the best. Thank you so much.

GREG KIRSCHNER: I'm sorry, Senator Anwar, if I confused the situation; that was not my intent, but I'd be happy to answer your questions down the line.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Well, that's why we have public hearings to have discussions so we get less or more confused. Thank you. [Laughter] Moving on, next person is Carrie Roberts, and Carrie, thank you for your patience today, and thank you for being here.

CARRIE ROBERTS: Thank you, Senator, for having me. I was going to say good afternoon, but it's evening, so good evening, Senator Anwar and Representative McGee. My name is Carrie Roberts, and I'm here to speak on the bill H.B. 5245, the landlord-tenant bill of an increasing to three-month deposit. I strongly oppose this bill. Allowing the landlords to do this makes it more difficult for people in domestic and abusive relationships. I am in an abusive relationship as of now. I am on the verge of being divorced from my ex, and finding affordable housing is a very hard thing to do.

By adding this bill, it's going to make it even harder for people and myself to find affordable housing because of your income and the situation that you're in. And I find this to be a not fair bill because of the fact that I'm struggling with the issue of divorce right now. I was not able to see it coming, and right now I'm trying to look for

housing which I cannot find or is not affordable to my income. Being that I'm on a government income, I have low income, and there is no available housing for me or anybody I know that is in this same situation. And I find this bill to be very not fair to people who want to live on their own, and as, you know, we once were kids, and we dreamed of having our own homes because that's what we dreamed of when we were kids, having our own place. By having this bill put out into the public, it's going to yank the rug out from under people that have that dream. And I've had that dream of having my own home since I was a little girl. And, I'm finding it very hard to have my own home in a safe place to lay my head at night. Thank you very much for your time.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much, Carrie, for sharing your experience with us, and thank you for your testimony. It is very important to us, and I'm so glad you stayed because this helps us understand the individual challenges that people may have from some of the policy recommendations. So, we appreciate you being here. Yes, Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Carrie, for being here, and you've been here the whole day, sitting in that front row. So, I want to say thank you and it does matter that your voice is heard, and I greatly value and appreciate it. So, thank you very, very much.

CARRIE ROBERTS: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Seeing no other comments, thank you so much, and we'll get the next person who

is Emily Coffey. Thank you so much, Ms. Coffey for being here, and thank you for your patience today.

EMILY COFFEY: Thank you. So, Dear Members of the Housing Committee, my name is Emily Coffey, and I'm an MSW policy practice student from UConn Hartford. I'm here to stand in support of S.B. 184 - AN ACT INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORKFORCE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN OUR STATE. According to the 2018 Connecticut ALICE Report, 40 percent of our households cannot afford basic living expenses. Low wages, depleted savings, and increased cost of living have made it increasingly difficult for working families to reside in our state.

Living here is not just costly, it's risky. Forty-six percent of our families do not have enough savings to cover their expenses for the next three months, and 36 percent do not set aside for emergencies. Our high housing cost burden is hurting people, especially our children and elderly. Housing wage is the hourly rate one must earn to afford the cost of living in their state. Connecticut has the ninth highest in the nation at \$25 dollars per hour. Yet, 45 percent of our jobs pay less than \$20 dollars per hour. Our state is not designed to protect working-class people, never mind those in extreme poverty. Nearly 30 percent of all our renters are extremely low income, and about 89 percent of those are elderly, disabled, or in the workforce. Baby boomers are growing older, exiting the workforce, while millennials are making different lifestyle choices from previous generations. What was attainable for my parents who were my age in 1989 is not doable for me today. The McMansions are out. The Average Jane needs housing

that is practical, affordable, and safe. Bill like S.B. 184 can get us there.

It's time for elected officials at state and town levels to stop exclusionary zoning practices that purposely make it difficult for developers to create workforce housing. I urge you to support S.B. 184 and keep our residents housed, safe, and working. We have 122,000 millionaire households in Connecticut for a ratio to total households of almost nine percent. A state as wealthy as ours should not have 40 percent of its households with unmet living expenses.

Workforce housing is an opportunity for us to grow in the areas of neighborhood revitalization, ecofriendly solutions, and marketing. In 2018 we had a net loss of almost 30,000 people. If we want to retain people in our state, we need to meet their needs. Now that we have passed paid family leave, imagine a place where we could care for our loved ones and live safely in a stable home that we won't get priced out of. Reading through the bulletin, I see so many possibilities for our housing industry, our railroads, and our schools. This is our chance to put CT back on the map and make it the hot new place that everyone wants to move to and not away from. Thank you for supporting CT's workforce with S.B. 184.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Wow, Emily, thank you so much for your testimony, and UConn is very fortunate to have you, and I can see the MSW in you completely. So, you are already advocating for everybody around you, and I think that's the most important quality of an MSW is to stand up for people, for taking care of their needs, and I truly appreciate your views,

and I agree with your thoughts, and I think that's the reason that we've been talking in this Committee about addressing that and finding a solution, and we're hoping that this bill would be one of the ways we can achieve that. Thank you so much.

EMILY COFFEY: Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Seeing no other comments, thank you for your testimony and thank -- Oh, sorry, Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): I promise to be brief. Other than to echo what the Chairman said and know that as that people may not be present, we appreciate you stepping up and doing what you do and speaking out. It does matter a lot; so, thank you very, very much. Well done.

EMILY COFFEY: Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): All right. Last but not the least, Kathy Flaherty. Thank you, Kathy, for your patience today, and thank you for being here, and thank you for being everywhere. [Laughter]
Welcome.

KATHY FLAHERTY: Hearing number five today; so, last but not least, I'm glad to be in Housing. My name is Kathy Flaherty. I'm the Executive Director of Connecticut Legal Rights Project, the Co-Chair of the Keep the Promise Committee, and a Steering Committee member of the Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance, but I always love testifying in Housing because I have been a housing legal aid attorney my entire career, and I've always loved housing. You have my written testimony, so I'm not going to repeat what I have here. Just pointing out that I

am not sure why when we're having an affordable housing crisis in Connecticut there is even a bill on your agenda to let landlords increase the amount of a security deposit so that somebody would have to pay four months' rent when they move in. That makes no sense to me whatsoever.

Here in support of H.B. 5242 because I do think we need to have people transition safely and DOC do effective discharge planning so people aren't homeless when they get out, but I anticipate that most of the questions I will get from Senator Hwang are in relation to my testimony on S.B. 185. We had a very good colloquy in the hallway, and I appreciated the opportunity to talk with you about this, but one of the things that really concerned me about what you said, and I'll be frank with you, when I look at bills, I click on the agendas of your various committees, and I read the bills, and all I can go on is what's in the bill, and then looking at the statute that you're proposing to modify and what's in that statute. So, to say that we doing our various jobs should know everything.

You guys are all part-time legislators. We don't expect any of you to be experts, either, but when we're looking at all the bills that are on your agenda, deciding which ones we're coming here to testify about, we speak from experience when we have this. I'm not going to repeat what Greg said, but I do find it interesting that there's an expectation on us to know everything when you don't even have that expectations on yourselves, nor should you. Okay. You know a lot about this because you represent that district. I would expect you to be an expert on it. What I would hope is that when we

come and we raise issues and we raise concerns that you would take what we're offering for what it's worth. You can choose to discount it because you know more about the situation than I do, and you're the elected official; that's all of your jobs.

I come here because I believe I say something that needs to be said because the reality is that people with disabilities used to be in institutions, they are now in our communities, and there are some people in some communities who are welcomed, and there're a lot of people in rather a lot of communities that simply aren't, and that's why I submitted the testimony. I do not think changing 8-3e is the way to go. There may well be other ways to deal with that particular applicant, but changing that statute, I urge you not to do that.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much for your testimony, and thank you for your passion and commitment to our state and being the voice for the people who do not have a strong voice, and I truly appreciate it. Do you have anything about any of the other bills you want to speak about?

KATHY FLAHERTY: Well, as supporting opposition H.B. 5245, just on the record. Supporting H.B. 5242, and I do support 183. I didn't know it was technically possible to make calls to 2-1-1 free or to not use up minutes, but it that technology exists, you definitely should do it. I have worked with a lot of clients for a lot of years, and, you know, I really hate when people call them Obama phones because really that whole program started under Reagan, and it was LifeLine for people to have phones in their houses, but under the Obama administration, they transferred to cell phones

because the reality is, is people don't have landlines; they have cell phones now. So, you already clearly knew that, Representative McGee, but for those people who didn't, it started under Reagan. [Laughter]

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Maybe they'll make more phone calls now. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mister Chair, and I don't have that many questions other than to first say, as Chairman said earlier, you have been a remarkable and a tireless advocate for your constituents and the membership and the people that are so happy to have you as a voice. And I think our conversation was on a basis of how much respect I have for you, and to be able to get your input, and I agree with you. This is why we have public hearings so that we learn. We exchange ideas, we exchange viewpoints, and we learn from each other continuously. So, my offer to you is as we continue to explore all of our bills and to explore Senate Bill 185, that we get your input and engage in that process to create the best bill because I think we are all unified in this Committee that independent living, group home, a sense of empowerment, a sense of independence is absolutely the way to go, and I know that we as a state have moved from the institutional structure to one being in the community. I, for one, have learned so much in watching people prosper and succeed in leading fulfilled lives. It's remarkable. And for those communities that aim to prevent them, this is what 8-3e is there for, truly. And I think for those bad actors in the past, we will root them out, and we will be able to create an equal access environment

for individuals in group homes, the protected classes. What I'm looking for is a better clarification of that definition and to be sure that we have a model that increases and affords access to everyone that is part of that protected class, to be able to live in a group home. So, it's less a question directed to you; it's one reflecting my respect and admiration for your passion and your knowledge and that as we move forward and work together as a Committee on this and have the dialogue, that we would ask of your expertise, ask of your input to craft a bill that ensures that group homes and the protected communities that you advocate for have a place in it. I will absolutely work to ensure that. So, thank you, Mister Chair.

KATHY FLAHERTY: Thank you.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): All right. With that, I think this was a good conversation. I think you will hear from us for more conversation and insight.

KATHY FLAHERTY: You know how to find me.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Yes, yes. Thank you so much. Thank you for your testimony. Oh, there's one more comment. Senator Hwang wants the last word, I tell you.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): No, if I may, I was just going to lighten up the whole day by simply saying how is it working with Rafie all these years?

KATHY FLAHERTY: Rafie's awesome.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Isn't he?

KATHY FLAHERTY: Yes.

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SENATOR HWANG (28TH): On that note, we should end on that positive note. We all think Rafie's awesome, too. Thank you, Kathy.

KATHY FLAHERTY: Thanks.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much. Thank you for your testimony. I want to make sure if anybody else wants to testify who has not testified. Seeing none, thank you so much, and with that, if we will entertain a motion to adjourn, we will close the public hearing. Thank you. Is there a second? I'll second it. All in favor? Aye.