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Testimony of State Representative Al Paolillo Jr., 97th District
in Support of HB 6354
An Act Concerning The Renters' Rebate Program For Senior Citizens And Persons With Disabilities

Aging Committee Public Hearing
Tuesday, February 8, 2020

Co-Chair Slap, Co-Chair Phipps, Vice Chair Lopes, Vice Chair Hughes, Ranking Member Kelly, Ranking Member Kelly and distinguished members of the Aging Committee, for the record my name is Al Paolillo, State Representative for New Haven's 97th District.

I am here to offer testimony in support of **H.B. 6354 An Act Concerning The Renters' Rebate Program For Senior Citizens And Persons With Disabilities**. Thank you for reserving this legislation for a public hearing here today. With the Aging Committee's help last year we were able to have a similar bill HB 5206 pass the committee in 2020 unanimously, until the session had ended due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

As we know from the amount of feedback we received as legislators when there was attempted administrative change to the Renter's Rebate program a few years ago, this is an essential program many seniors and those who are disabled rely upon.

In my district I have Bella Vista, which is a Senior Living Community and I have heard many of my constituents who have experienced frustration with the application process. I understand there has been a need for some municipalities to require notarization of applications to verify residency of an applicant with a landlord, however, this additional requirement has caused constituents to miss or nearly miss sensitive deadlines. Constituents have also said they were not given enough notification between when they filled out the application and when they were notified of the requirement. This fix is simple, just allow for renters who have already verified their address at their current location to be exempt for the notarization requirement in future years after the first verification.

There also was an instance of a constituent that missed a deadline due to medical issues in which he forfeited the Renter's Rebate benefit he relied upon. Funds for Renter's Rebate are already appropriated by the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) based on an expectation of a previous year's applications. It would not cost extra money from what is appropriated already. So this year language that allows for an exemption for late filing for those with medical issues is especially important given the impact of Covid-19.

I strongly believe that with these changes will help simplify the Renter's Rebate application process and make it easier for our seniors and those who are disabled, whether they rely on this funding to help pay a heating bill, their rent or any other expense. It should be our goal to make sure that anyone who is otherwise qualified for the program receives this very important benefit.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on this legislation here today and I look forward to working with the Aging Committee to secure passage of this important piece of legislation.