

Testimony of Tina Yeitz

President, Connecticut Association of Residential Care Homes

Re: S.B. No. 975 (RAISED) AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE BILL OF RIGHTS FOR LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY RESIDENTS.

Aging Committee Public Hearing, March 9, 2021

Senator Slap, Representative Phipps, Senator Kelly, Representative Wilson and Members of the Aging Committee: My name is Tina Yeitz and I am the Vice President of the Connecticut Association of Residential Care Homes (CARCH) and the administrator of Eliza Huntington Home in Norwich. **I am here today to raise concerns with S.B. No. 975 (RAISED) AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE BILL OF RIGHTS FOR LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY RESIDENTS.**

Residential Care Homes care for some of the most vulnerable people in the state with the majority of our residents having mental health diagnoses and many having other ailments. The pandemic was a particularly challenging time for our residents and staff as our homes are congregate settings with shared living spaces. Our employees worked on the frontlines during the pandemic for wages slightly above minimum wage. Our administrators and experienced staff often covered additional shifts and at times worked 80 plus hours due to the lack of available staff. And most of our residents spent months in lockdown with limited contact outside the home and some becoming ill with the virus.

We appreciate the intent behind the legislation to ensure that residents' autonomy and rights are respected. It is important to remember that residential care homes largely care for residents who are mobile and free to come and go as they please from the home.

Most residential care homes have a set of house rules which have similarities to landlord-tenant agreements but set additional expectations for living in the community setting. These agreements ensure that the resident understands this is a community setting and there are certain expectations for all residents. These agreements can involve living quarter dynamics since most residential care home living quarters are shared rooms. For instance, many homes may establish quiet periods so as to avoid loud music or other disruptive behavior late into the night.

Our concern with the language centers on the ambiguity with the language, "and has no fewer rights than any other resident of the state." We agree that the residential care home is their home and should be treated as such. However, the terminology "no fewer rights than other residents" is confusing and vague and fails to fully consider all of the other public health laws and regulations that homes must abide by.

Even landlord-tenant relationships impose certain dynamics that may lead to treating a rental differently than a homeowner. Residential care homes may establish customary door knocking rules to respect the resident's privacy but also ensure the safety of everyone in the home. A resident may have the right to not respond in a home or even

apartment but in our homes if that was the case, we would eventually enter the room consistent with the rules of the house and out of concern for the resident.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with the Committee and other stakeholders further but believe the current bill language is problematic and vague.