



CCM Testimony

545 Long Wharf Drive., 8th Floor, New Haven, CT 06511 • 203-498-3000



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

February 21, 2024

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent 168 towns and cities.

HB 5174 (RAISED) An Act Concerning Temporary Shelter Units for Persons Experiencing Homelessness Located on Real Property Owned by Religious Organizations.

CCM is opposed to HB 5174, which would allow "as-of-right" approval for the installation of temporary shelter units for persons experiencing homelessness on real property owned by religious organizations.

Towns and cities empathize and understand the need to address the homelessness crisis that is impacting individuals and families in Connecticut and the role religious institutions play in this endeavor. That said, this bill is not the answer.

CCM has concerns HB 5174 since it would circumvent the local zoning and permitting process and allow temporary structures "as-of-right." While the proposal does grant municipalities the ability to prescribe and prohibit certain aspects listed in Section 2 of the bill, they are limited in scope.

There are reasons why it is a best practice for building and public health departments as well as local zoning boards to be engaged in the process of siting structures and dwellings. They are there to protect the health and safety of all its residents, businesses and non-profit community members.

Considerations such as ensuring that sanitary requirements are met, facilities will be code compliant and the temporary shelter units are sufficiently built prior to them being installed is paramount to a municipality's ability to fulfill their obligation to protect the welfare of those living in the temporary structures and their neighbors. No other entities have this right and religious institutions should not be the exception.

CCM has concerns that the "as-of-right" language will limit the ability of a municipality to properly manage and regulate these structures since there is 1) no definition of how long is "temporary" for the structure to remain erected, thus circumventing State Building Code, 2) it allows up to eight temporary shelter units of up to four hundred feet in size regardless of the size of the lot or buildable land, 3) setbacks are only ten feet from an adjacent property owner and 4)



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municipal water and sewer authorities will not be able to take into account the increased usage generated by the temporary shelter units sited at religious institutions. Finally, while the bill allows municipalities to consider the installation of temporary shelter units in relation to elementary and secondary schools, it does not allow municipalities to regulate their proximity to daycare centers and pre-K education programs that may actually be held at the religious institution, which is highly problematic.

Towns and cities have been and continue to be on the forefront of the homelessness issue. CCM understands the importance of developing best practices and coordinated actions municipalities can take to combat homelessness with their state and community partners.

CCM asks the Committee to hold HB 5174 and maintain the integrity of the local permitting process and enable towns and cities to protect the health and welfare of their communities.

CCM looks forward to partnering with the State and other stakeholders to find solutions to address homelessness within our communities.

If you have any questions, please contact Zachary McKeown, of CCM at zmckeown@ccm-ct.org.