

PA10-056

HB5372

| | | |
|---------|---|----|
| House | 1494-1499 | 6 |
| Housing | 32-52, 103-109, 126-130, 183-194, 201-205, 254-276, 303 | 74 |
| Senate | 3068, 3180-3182 | 4 |
| | | 84 |

H – 1077

**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2010**

**VOL.53
PART 5
1169 – 1557**

rgd/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

138
April 22, 2010

THE CLERK:

House Bill 5402 as amended by House "A."

Total Number voting 143

Necessary for adoption 72

Those voting Yea 143

Those voting Nay 0

Those absent and not voting 8

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

The bill as amended is passed.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar 108.

THE CLERK:

On page 20, Calendar 108, Substitute for House Bill Number 5372, AN ACT CONCERNING VISITABLE HOUSING, favorable report of the Committee on Planning and Development.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

The honorable Chairman of the Housing Committee, Representative Green, you have the floor, sir.

REP. GREEN (1st):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

The question before the Chamber is acceptance of

rgd/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

139
April 22, 2010

the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill. Will you remark, sir?

REP. GREEN (1st):

Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a, I think, a forward thinking and creative bill that talks about the visit-ability housing. This housing is to encourage people with disabilities to be able to visit their friends.

And calls for three specific issues for that type of housing. That would be entryways that have doorways that have at least 32 inches, so that people with wheelchairs can get in the door. It will recommend that there will be no steps in the front or back entrance so that again, there are no steps that a person in a wheelchair may have to go through. And it will encourage hallways and a bathroom on the first floor to be accessible for wheelchairs and a bathroom that will be accessible for the wheelchair, to be able to go into the bathroom and be able to be maneuvered.

Mr. speaker, the Clerk should be in possession of LCO Number 3886. I ask that it be called and I be allowed to summarize.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

rgd/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

140
April 22, 2010

Will the Clerk please call LCO 3886 to be designated House Amendment Schedule "A."

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 3886, House "A," offered by Representative Green and Senator Gomes.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

The gentleman has asked leave of the Chamber to summarize his amendment. Is there any objection? Is there any objection to summarization? If not, sir, please summarize your amendment.

REP. GREEN (1st):

Yes. The amendment does not change the concept of the bill which I just described. What the amendment does is simply clarifies that the Department of Economic and Community Development, versus CHFA, would be the lead agency in terms of promoting this concept. I move its adoption.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

The question before the Chamber is adoption of House Amendment Schedule "A." Will you remark on House "A?" If not, I will try your minds. All in favor of House Amendment Schedule "A," signify by saying, aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

rgd/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

141
April 22, 2010

Aye.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

All those opposed, nay.

House "A" is adopted.

Will you remark further on the bill as amended?

Will you remark further on the bill as amended? If not, will staff and guests -- oh, excuse me.

In under the wire, the distinguished gentleman from Stratford, Representative Miller, you have the floor, sir.

REP. MILLER (122nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in support of the bill as amended.

Given that the population of America is growing older, just about every year we're getting better treatments, better care. We're living longer.

People are having difficulties getting around. It's important that we do everything we can to make sure our seniors who have paved the way for what we have today have the ability to go in to other homes and to be able to move around with their wheelchairs.

So certainly, this is something that's beneficial for them and something that we ought to be doing. And I urge your support.

rgd/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

142
April 22, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

Thank you, sir, for your remarks.

Will you remark further on the bill as amended?

Will you remark further on the bill as amended? If not, will staff and guests please come to the well of the House. Will the members please take your seats.

The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call. Members to the chamber. The House is voting by ~~roll~~ roll call. Members to the chamber, please.

(Speaker Donovan in the Chair.)

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted? Please check the roll call board to make sure your vote has been properly cast. If all the members have voted, the machine will be locked and the Clerk will please take a tally. Clerk, please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

House Bill Number 5372 as amended by House "A."

rgd/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

143
April 22, 2010

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Total Number voting | 143 |
| Necessary for adoption | 72 |
| Those voting Yea | 143 |
| Those voting Nay | 0 |
| Those absent and not voting | 8 |

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

The bill as amended is passed.

The Clerk please call Calendar 119.

THE CLERK:

On page 21, Calendar 119, Substitute for House
Bill Number 5244, AN ACT CONCERNING THE ISSUANCE OF
EMERGENCY CERTIFICATES BY CERTAIN STAFF OF THE
EMERGENCY MOBILE PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES PROGRAM,
favorable report of the Committee on Public health.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

The Vice Chair of Human Services Committee, from
Meriden, Representative Cathy Abercrombie, you have
the floor, madam.

REP. ABERCROMBIE (33rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I move for the acceptance of the
joint committee's favorable report and passage of the
bill.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

S - 607

**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2010**

**VOL. 53
PART 10
2913 - 3250**

djp/ch/gbr
SENATE

353
May 3, 2010

Calendar 475. Calendar 5402, that might have been listed in error. In any case that should not be on the Consent Calendar and to add an item to the Consent Calendar, Mr. President, is an item on calendar page 14, Calendar 480, House Bill 5372, would move to place that item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Motion to place Calendar 480, House Bill 5372 on Consent.

Seeing no objection, so ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Also a couple of items to -- to remove from the -- from the Consent Calendar. One of those was calendar page 33, Calendar 231, Senate Bill 292 should be removed from the Consent Calendar and marked go.

THE CHAIR:

It is marked go, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes thank you, Mr. President.

And also, Mr. President, calendar page 34, Calendar 258, Senate Bill 274 should also be removed from the Consent Calendar and marked go.

THE CHAIR:

djp/ch/gbr
SENATE

465
May 3, 2010

THE CLERK:

Roll call -- roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate on the Consent Calendar. Will all senators please return to the chamber? Roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate on the Consent Calendar. Will all senators please return to the chamber? And pay particular close attention to the call of those items placed on the Consent Calendar.

Starting with Senate Agenda Number 3, Substitute for Senate Bill 456; calendar page 2, Calendar 143, Substitute for Senate Bill 393; calendar page 12, Calendar 462, Substitute for Senate Bill 5404; calendar page 13, Calendar 475, House Bill 5402; calendar page 14, Calendar 479, Substitute for House Bill 5028; Calendar 480, Substitute for House Bill 5372; calendar page 23, Calendar Number 541, House Bill 5241; calendar page 25, Calendar 35, Senate Bill 12; calendar page 27, Calendar 106, Substitute for Senate Bill 318; Calendar 122, Substitute for Senate Bill 319; calendar page 29, Calendar 169, Substitute for Senate Bill 108; Calendar 170, Substitute for Senate Bill 109; calendar page 30, Calendar 195, Substitute for Senate Bill 414; calendar page 31, Calendar 206, Substitute for Senate Bill 382;

djp/ch/gbr
SENATE

466
May 3, 2010

calendar page 32, Calendar 218, Substitute for Senate Bill 302; Calendar 223, Substitute for Senate Bill 380; Calendar 230, Senate Bill 283; calendar page 33, Calendar 235, Substitute for Senate Bill 216; calendar page 34, Calendar 258, Substitute for Senate Bill 274; calendar page 35, Calendar 316, Substitute for Senate Bill 278; calendar page 36, Calendar 318, Substitute for Senate Bill 418 and calendar page 40, Calendar 546, Senate Resolution Number 17.

Mr. President, I believe that completes the items placed on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

The machine is open on the Consent Calendar.

THE CLERK:

The Senate is voting by roll call on the Consent Calendar. Will all senators please return to the chamber? The Senate is voting by roll on the Consent Calendar. Will all senators please return to the chamber?

THE CHAIR:

Senators please check the board to make certain that your vote is properly recorded. If all Senators have voted and all Senators votes are properly recorded, the machine will be locked

djp/ch/gbr
SENATE

467
May 3, 2010

and the Clerk may take a tally.

THE CLERK:

Motion is on passage of Consent Calendar

Number 1.

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| Total Number Voting | 35 |
| Those Voting Yea | 35 |
| Those Voting Nay | 0 |
| Those Absent, Not Voting | 1 |

THE CHAIR:

Consent Calendar 1 is adopted.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I would yield the floor to any members for announcements or points of personal privilege.

THE CHAIR:

Are there announcements or points of personal privilege? Are there announcements or points of personal privilege?

Seeing none, Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**HOUSING
1 – 306**

2010

Okay, at this point we're going to go to the general public, and we're going to call on people who need some assistance in their testimony. First on the list is Sharon Denson, I believe it is. All right.

SHARON DENSON: There. I got it right there. I've got it. I've got it.

Mr. Chair, members of the committee. First of all, my name is Sharon Denson. I'm a member of the Northeast Disability Collaborative and a number of other organizations, and I'm here to talk to you today about House Bill 5372.

First of all, I want to clarify a couple things about the bill. First of all, we're advocating for visitability, not accessibility, so that we're not requiring by this bill that a house be made fully handicapped accessible, just that somebody in a wheelchair like myself can visit, which is really important.

This means that we are asking for one zero-step entrance that could be through a garage, wider hallways and doorways, doorways 32 inches of unobstructed passage, a hallway of 42 inches optimum, and one bathroom on the main floor for a wheelchair.

Now, many good points have been made by former speakers regarding this, and there are important statistics about aging and aging in place, and, obviously, you know, it's -- it's much easier to age in a place where there is a bathroom on the first floor, and you can get in with a wheelchair, and that is always important. And that is really a very important point.

The financial cost also for disability and other important points are extremely low, and we are offering incentives so that disability can be put in place. However, there are human costs and human factors to take into account. And I think this is really important to think about.

First of all, disability is the only minority group that anybody can become a part of and actually unwillingly. Okay. I wasn't always disabled until ten years ago or 15 years ago. I was skiing, and I was doing all the things that everybody else does. And I ended up contracting muscular dystrophy, which has changed my life, actually in many, many good ways, so I'm not complaining. There's some very, very good, wonderful things about that.

So what we're talking about here is not disabled people. We're talking about everybody, because we're all a part of this. All of -- all of us, at one point or another, we come to an age or a point in our life where we'll experience some kind of disability, whether you break your leg in a skiing accident or you trip and fall down a flight of stairs and break an arm or -- there's -- there's so many different ways that you can become temporarily part of the disability community.

Or you can end up needing a hip replacement and having to come back to your house and being unable to return to your house and having to be in a nursing facility for a while, because you don't have a visitable home. So there are lots of human costs.

But I'd like to also talk to you about something else. Imagine that you are disabled, and you're in a position something

like myself, and you have the family Christmas dinner or Easter dinner or Passover Seder, and can't go because you can't get into the home where that -- that particular celebration is taking place. Wouldn't it be wonderful if there was more housing so that you could get into that home?

Or imagine if somebody carries you into that house, and you can get in. You have your dinner. Unfortunately, it is a dinner, and you -- you have to use the bathroom. But there's no bathroom for you to use. Now, if you're a guy, I guess you could go out to the bushes. Being a woman, I have other issues that I can't quite -- nobody can carry me out to the bushes. Unfortunately, it doesn't look very good in the backyard.

But -- and I'm being humorous here, but, you know, the -- the fact is that we all want to be able to make members of our family included as part of our celebrations, and this can make them -- we all want to be able to invite all of our friends over and not have to worry about them being there. It's very, very difficult if you don't have that ability to be able to do that.

When my father became ill -- this was about ten or 15 years ago when I was able to have the privilege of taking care of him before he passed away -- to bring him back home from the hospital, I had to renovate his house. And I had to put many, many renovations in to do this. And this was in New York. It was not here.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if people were able to come back to their home after being in the hospital or a nursing home, even if it means that it's just that bathroom on the first

floor? They could set up a bed in the living room, and they come back in their own home. And like I said, there is a major human factor to this, which is still very important.

More than the money that you're saving for the state, which you would be, along with, you know, Money Follows the Person, more than the money that's been saved -- that's saved by the towns with programs that they would have to do to make housing accessible.

It's just a very, very important bill, and it's a start to make life easier for everybody, because we're all in this -- we're all in this together. This is not about the disability community. It's about us as a human community. We're all handicapped to some degree.

REP. BUTLER: Okay. Could you please summarize, seeing that I didn't initially say that we're actually limiting the public to three minutes, because we have other people --

SHARON DENSON: Okay. I'm done.

REP. BUTLER: Okay.

SHARON DENSON: I'm done.

Thank you so much.

REP. BUTLER: Sharon, is there any other final thoughts you'd like to share?

SHARON DENSON: No. No.

REP. BUTLER: Okay. Great.

SHARON DENSON: Thank you very much for listening and considering what we have to say.

REP. BUTLER: If there's any -- does a representative have questions?

Representative Green.

REP. GREEN: Thank you.

Thank you for coming today. I think that just so that everyone knows in the audience, if -- if you don't know some of the process with our legislation and our bills and our proposed bills, we do have a lot of language that is subject to a lot of revisions, a lot of changes.

And so in this particular bill that you spoke of, you talked about accessible housing -- a lot of people will be talking about visitability today.

SHARON DENSON: I was talking about visitability today.

REP. GREEN: Right. And the bill -- and the language would probably include more of the term "visitability" than "accessibility" as we move forward --

SHARON DENSON: Right.

REP. GREEN: -- in it so that -- and one thing I just want to caution people about is the specific language and, you know, the differences. And, you know, for myself and probably for some members of the committee, we're very much, I think, glad that we're using this new term or different term or another term to describe the different kinds of accessible housing -- available housing, and I think that you said a couple of things that I think are very important.

That is that this allows people to -- who are nondisabled -- to have those who may be disabled to be able to visit. You -- you mentioned that you weren't always disabled. In your current condition, do you find that you're able to go visit friends, or do you feel limited now in terms of being able to based on the structure of their homes?

SHARON DENSON: I'm very limited based on the structure of their home, and it is very, very difficult. And then there's some major issues with that, and it's very sad, because, you know, you'd like to be able to visit people, and then you can't. I mean, obviously, I -- I could have them over to my home (inaudible) --

REP. GREEN: Right.

SHARON DENSON: -- or we could meet in a restaurant, but it has severely limited my ability to visit people.

REP. GREEN: Have you had any conversation with some individuals who you may have wanted to visit and talked about this concept of visitability? And what has been some of the reaction, because that there's some learning curve for a lot of people where they have to maybe think about, you know, what does this mean, and, like you said, does it mean accessible housing necessarily?

What may have been some feedback in terms of, "Gee, this would have been a good idea if my home would have been built like this in the beginning?" Does that kind of conversation come up, or what has been some of the reaction?

SHARON DENSON: It comes up all the time. The reaction is very positive, and the reaction is, "Gee, I had not thought about that." And particularly the people I talk to who are older and getting older. They think, "Oh, my gosh, what's going to happen when I need a bathroom on the first floor or when I need -- when I need access to those?"

And also I noticed there were people who have aging parents who think this is a great idea, because their parents are having a hard time visiting them. So I've gotten very positive feedback on the visitability issue.

I had brought it up to the Town of West Hartford and had worked with it on -- with an ordinance in West Hartford with Kimberly Bonin and, unfortunately, because of the state building code, we were unable to write that ordinance. And the Town Council in West Hartford was very much in favor of the visitability.

REP. GREEN: When you say the Town of West Hartford was interested in doing this, but the state building codes, did you know very quickly what -- what did the state building codes say that would not allow visitability homes?

SHARON DENSON: I do not have it. I did not bring it with me, but there is a specific section in the building code, and I do not have it in front of me, and I apologize for that.

REP. GREEN: Okay. We can find out, but -- and I'm doing some research on that, and I just didn't know if something glared out in terms of what they said was -- was why and --

SHARON DENSON: I have it at home, actually, on my desk.

REP. GREEN: Okay. If you have any information, we're doing some research on it now, because we did hear about that situation.

SHARON DENSON: Yes. Yes. Yes. And I -- and I've spoken to Jean Hayes from OLR, and I had put her in touch with Kimerly Bonin, who is one of the lawyers in the town of West Hartford who was actually working on that ordinance when you discovered she couldn't write it.

REP. GREEN: Okay. All right. And if it's the state building codes, that may be where we can -- we can come in, and we will be -- continue to do more research on it.

SHARON DENSON: Exactly. Well, what is -- what she had discovered -- Kimberly discovered that -- that either the building code would have to have been rewritten in a certain way or that they would have -- she would have to write an exception to the building code or requesting an exception to the building code, which takes a really long time.

So as a group, the disability collaborative decided why not fix the issue in the state, and then there wouldn't have to be an exception for every single time a town wanted to write a visitability ordinance.

REP. GREEN: Okay. In my office, legislative research just informed me that we're looking at and we have identified, we think, where some of the issues are, and so --

SHARON DENSON: Okay.

REP. GREEN: -- we -- we will probably have to draft that and continue to explore that, so thank you.

And thank you, Mr. Chair.

SHARON DENSON: Thank you.

REP. BUTLER: Thank you.

Representative Miller.

REP. MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon.

SHARON DENSON: Good afternoon.

REP. MILLER: I had a breakfast meeting this morning at a children's need facility in Trumbull, affiliated with the Saint Vincent's Hospital, and I must have viewed 25 different types of chairs. I never knew these things existed. From long -- long-style chairs with wheels that are five to six feet apart, and all sorts of things. You look like a petite woman --

SHARON DENSON: I am.

REP. MILLER: -- and there are chairs that I saw at this facility that were very small. I don't know if they're structurally sound for an adult, but they seem like they would fit through a normal doorway and hallway. Is that -- is that something that is possible for the -- for especially smaller people to -- to utilize on a daily basis? I'm not sure if these were temporary chairs for short distances. I'm not -- I don't know what they were used for.

SHARON DENSON: Wheelchairs are something that -- you know, when I -- before I became disabled, I thought a wheelchair was a chair with wheels

on it. However, it's a whole lot more than that. And when you're in a wheelchair, it's your entire life. And so wheelchairs have different features for different people, and they're so individual that you're actually fitted for a wheelchair by an occupational therapist.

So, yes, there are small wheelchairs. There are chairs that you can buy at Walgreen's for \$299 and maybe can wheel your grandmother through the airport with them. And there's all different kinds of things, but chairs are a specific size for medical reasons -- for specific medical reasons.

So I'm a small person. I'm in a relatively large chair because I need my chair to be able to do certain things for me that I can't do for myself. And so you saw people in chairs who were -- that were designed for them. And I -- am I answering your question?

REP. MILLER: (Inaudible).

SHARON DENSON: Okay. Okay. All right. Okay. No, but I can understand exactly how you feel, and I understand exactly where you're coming from, so like I said, I thought a wheelchair was a chair with wheels on it, and it -- it's not -- definitely not.

REP. BUTLER: Thank you, and thank you for your testimony.

SHARON DENSON: You're very welcome.

REP. BUTLER: Next, we're going to have Candace Low, followed by Michelle Duprey.

And as they're coming forward, I would just remind everyone we have a three-minute egg

timer, and when you hear it go off, if you could please summarize your thoughts. Appreciate it. Thank you.

CANDACE LOW: Okay. Good afternoon, Representative Green, Housing Committee members and other interested parties.

My name is Candace Low and I'm Executive Director of Independence Unlimited. It's a center for independent living here located in Hartford -- kind of a one-stop disability resource center for people with disabilities. I want to thank you for listening to us about this very important issue which is building accessible, and I include the word "visitable" housing to create inclusive communities.

Along with my comments, I will be including comments from the fellow director of a sister center, Tony LaCava from Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County who could not be here today but wanted to show his support for Raised Bill 5372, AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESSIBLE HOUSING.

For many years, advocates -- disability advocates have sought to make communities friendlier to people with disabilities, people who are 60 and older, and more inclusive in general to all people. Many homes are off limits or inaccessible to a large segment of the population. I used these statistics this morning, but some of you weren't here, so I'll repeat them.

It's shown nationwide that one in five people have some kind of disability. At least 5 percent of the population use some kind of mobility aid -- wheelchair, walker, cane, family member -- I've done that. Three percent of Americans live in homes with any

kind of accessibility feature, although 30 percent of the families contain at least one member with a disability. And nationwide, over one million households that have one person with a disability have unmet housing needs.

The impact of having unmet housing needs can include isolation, because you can't get in or out of your home, comprised health and safety, because people can't get in to help you, or institutionalization, because it seems to be the choice that we always make. Okay, this person can't remain in their home the way it is, so they can go to a nursing facility.

As we age and live longer and veterans continue to come home with injuries, the need for accessible and visitable housing will increase to meet the needs of the aging and disability populations.

I also am here to promote another solution to housing for people with mobility disabilities can use and that's the concept of visitability. We've had several meetings with Representative Green about introducing this new term. We think that it may be an affordable, sustainable and inclusive design approach to integrating basic accessibility features into all newly-built single and two-family homes.

Visitability incorporates three main features to make housing more welcoming: one no-step entrance on an accessible path of travel, 32 clear opening at doorways and accessible circulations throughout the plan and basic bathroom.

The visitability initiative was based on the conviction that social participation and the

inclusion of basic architectural access features in new homes is a civil and basic human right and improves livability for all. Inclusive communities allow neighbors with all kinds of abilities to interact or visit each other and participate in community activities.

Visitability and the use of universal design on a community level permits full access to social participation in community affairs and interaction with neighbors. Visitability is an important step in making universal access to community life a reality for those who are currently -- currently and consistently excluded.

Representative Green's bill goes a long way to making more inclusive communities happen. The idea that homes may be open to neighbors, friends and family members with disabilities means that a person with any mobility disability can live in their own home and invite persons with mobility issues to visit with a degree of naturalness.

It will provide an opportunity for builders, developers, community leaders, family members and people who need accessible and visitable homes to embrace full inclusion for everyone by supporting inclusive communities.

Connecticut has a wonderful program called "Money Follows a Person." Someone else who testified talked about that, where we transition people out of the nursing facility into the community.

The Representative bill's Green -- Green's bill, sorry -- Representative Green's bill will decrease Medicaid spending of funds used for home modifications are not needed. It also embraces the idea that going to a nursing

39
cip/gbr

HOUSING COMMITTEE

March 4, 2010
1:00 P.M.

home when you can no longer live in your own home due to access issues is not the only choice.

I want to thank Representative Green for his forward thinking introducing Bill 5372, providing initiatives for voluntary development of inclusive communities through building accessible or visitable homes as a next step to helping people stay in their own homes when they can remain participating members of the community.

I want to thank you all for listening.

REP. BUTLER: Are there any questions?

Representative Green.

REP. GREEN: Thank you.

And thank you, Ms. Low, for coming.

We've had an opportunity, and -- and your organization has helped me, and Ed's helping to educate me, and -- and we find out that this is really a -- a direction, I think, the state of Connecticut can begin to move in.

Can you tell me, do you know of any communities or any developers or any initiatives, maybe on a volunteer basis now where folks are saying, hey, this is -- this is a concept that we wanted built, and -- and are homes being built anywhere under this visitability concept? Do you know of any?

CANDACE LOW: In Connecticut?

REP. GREEN: Yes.

CANDACE LOW: In Connecticut, yes. Oddly, we have one member who is working on building this type of home that's going to talk today, that's Bart (inaudible) --

REP. GREEN: Oh, that's great.

CANDACE LOW: So I believe there is a development in Crystal Springs -- called Crystal Springs -- and then if you've seen on the news recently, there's a development in Groton that's going to be incorporating some accessible features -- accessible design in to that, so there are a few.

I think that the approach, too, that we will need to take is a lot of educating -- educating the builders and the developers about that this is a positive thing, you know, that helps everyone, and that this is the future of what we need to have.

And I know for myself, I moved here from Oklahoma, where it's relatively flat, and we didn't have too much of this accessibility problem. I was really surprised. But I have mobility issues, and it took me two years to find a home that I could rent and a landlord that would be wonderful enough that if I needed to make modifications to that home, I could. Two years.

And it was the other part of time that I was living in an apartment with that -- that really was an exhausting search in a lot of various communities to be able to find a landlord that was open to making any modifications that I might need it whenever or a home that was -- that I could get into. I do have steps, but I can get in place with this, because it -- it can be modified, but I

would much rather have been able to find a visitable single-family home.

REP. GREEN: The -- one of the towns I -- I'm beginning to understand, West Hartford, wanted to try to do it on this to talk kind of like expand this idea, maybe even write an ordinance to address it. And there was some issue called building codes.

Now, in talking to -- and I'm -- I'm going to assume here, maybe I -- I shouldn't, but in talking to some of the builders that's building the visitability, they had not found any issues with building codes in terms of building this.

Is it more of their meeting all the building codes versus trying to have a city do an ordinance that might conflict with the state, so you're not hearing any problem from these developers saying the building -- the state building codes are preventing us from doing this?

CANDACE LOW: We're still in the beginning of our research. We had a breakfast last -- last October with stakeholders. We had some -- some developers and builders come. There were a lot of issues, I believe, that -- that you're going to talk about later?

A VOICE: (Inaudible).

CANDACE LOW: We're trying to develop his accessible home. There were a lot of issues and a lot of barriers to trying to do that. So, yes, we have heard some, that there are issues and barriers to it. The Town of West Hartford -- we've still been trying to research and figure out exactly what is the problem. You know, where -- where is the

problem in the building code or is it the style too.

And we talked about that with you in our meeting. I think we need someone who's involved in building to help us with that particular point, a consultant, but I know that just in discussing various with our consumers, there was issues that they tried to have, things that they've come up on trying to make some kind of a modification or building a visitable or accessible home.

They are have -- they had a lot of issues with specifics in the building code, you know, that they couldn't do this because the code requires a certain amount of rise for the doorway or that you had to have certain particular about a grade, an E2R or whatever, you know, so there were specific incidents that they were talking about. I think there've been people with different experiences for that.

So we -- we will be, you know, researching to see, you know, what is the problem, because not only will this legislation provide the incentive, but there may need to be another step in that -- removing that barrier -- has been able to get it done.

REP. GREEN: So there's a few states and -- oh, I'm sorry -- there's a few states that have some visitability legislation, and have you heard, let's say, from any of those states in terms of what worked well or ones that didn't work well, because we may have to look at some of those states for some direction on how we might do this. What's been the general response from some of those states, if you have any information on how that's been working?

CANDACE LOW: I've researched them, and Sue can answer that question, too, because she's worked with them, but I came from the middle of the United States, and Texas has been working on this issue for a long time. They have specific communities in Texas that have -- like Austin, for example -- that have a visitability program.

There's about 60 visitability programs across the United States. Some are counties, some are towns, and then some are states. So they're at different levels. Georgia is another place that really will square this idea with Borum -- Borum Concrete Change -- which is an organization who really kind of started the social movement of visitability, because people with disabilities were meeting so much resistance to try to get accessible housing.

So if you can't get accessible housing, maybe you can get it so you can get into the door and use the bathroom and wash your hands. So that's kind of where that came from. Sue can add more for that information on that particular question.

REP. GREEN: Okay. Well, thank you. I think it's a wonderful concept, and we'll continue to look at what we have to do in this state and organizations to see if we can move a concept like this. I think it is a very great initiative for this state.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. BUTLER: Thank you.

And thank you for your testimonies.

44
cip/gbr

HOUSING COMMITTEE

March 4, 2010
1:00 P.M.

CANDACE LOW: Thank you for yours. Do you have a question for me? Oh, okay. Thank you.

REP. BUTLER: Next, we'll have Michelle Duprey.

MICHELLE DUPREY: Good afternoon, Representative Green, and members of the committee.

HB5372

I was going to initially talk about the issues facing people with disabilities in finding housing similar to what has already been said by others, so I'm going to talk briefly. I'm Director of Disability Services for the City of New Haven. And we've been looking at disability for maybe seven years now.

When it first became a movement in Georgia, it came across our radar, and we've done extensive research, and we initially thought it -- it is a fabulous idea, and it definitely needs to be done, but during the course of our research, we met a great deal of resistance from the home builders community.

And so that -- so we, unfortunately, abandoned our efforts in New Haven because of that. But that has been an issue in the past. But I think it's so vital for our community to revisit this, because people with disabilities make up about 20 percent of our state residents.

The -- not only are the issues about finding housing critical, if you're looking for accessible housing in New Haven, you can have anywhere from a six-month to a two-year wait, which is ridiculous.

I know when I accepted my job in New Haven, I lived in Avon, and I commuted for 15 months from Avon to New Haven and actually did not find accessible housing, but I found housing

that I could make accessible, and it cost \$7,000 to put a ramp in for two steps. So it's much more expensive to do it after the fact than -- than during construction. But I think the -- one of the interesting things that New Haven looks at is in emergency planning. And this is probably -- not heard this from anybody else. In an emergency, when people have to evacuate their home, people with disabilities don't have a lot of options but to go to a shelter.

And so in New Haven, we are planning that a bulk of the people that are going to come to our emergency shelters are going to be people with disabilities because they don't have family members with accessible homes that they can go to. So a lot of folks can go to -- like Susan's house in -- in another town or (inaudible) part of the city to get out of an emergency situation.

People with disabilities can't. And this might provide an opportunity for people, if there's visitable homes, that we don't have to worry about people with disabilities that have -- have difficult needs to be met showing up at emergency shelters. So I think that's something else to consider in the value of this bill.

And finally, I am a little concerned about the issue of payment in lieu of taxes as an incentive, and hopefully, in the final draft of the bill, municipalities don't suffer any revenue loss because of this incentive, because we're losing a lot of revenue from the state as it is, and can't afford to lose anymore. So if you could just keep that in mind.

And I'd be happy to share with your staff the research my staff has done on visitability and both elderly services in the city and my office has done a lot of work on this. So we'd be happy to support you, and I'd be happy to take any questions.

REP. BUTLER: Thank you.

Are there any questions? Okay.

Well, thank you.

Next, we have Ana Estrada, followed by Alberta Witherspoon. Is Ana here?

ANA ESTRADA: Here.

REP. BUTLER: Okay.

ANA ESTRADA: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen of the house -- ladies and gentlemen of the Housing Committee.

My name is Ana Estrada. I live in Community Towers in Meriden, Connecticut. I am a tenant council member there at Community Towers. I am -- I am also a member of the Board of the Public Housing Resident Network. I have been a public housing resident for -- for over 15 years, both in New Jersey and -- and now here. I also served on our -- on the Tenant Council in Hudson Gardens in Jersey City, New Jersey, as well.

I come before you today to speak in favor of the Senate Bill 320, the selection of the tenant commissioners. I feel that this legislation is very, and I emphasize, very important in that it allows for the residents to elect their -- their resident

97
cip/gbr

HOUSING COMMITTEE

March 4, 2010
1:00 P.M.

So, again, I would have to figure out how -- how that's working in terms of keeping units low and -- and affordable in that town through the one on one replacement, because that's been one of the criticisms that I -- I just happened to hear about -- Stamford and some of the direction it's going with the cost of housing in that -- that area.

JEFFREY FREISER: Yes. I mean, that housing authority has been very entrepreneurial. They've been very creative in patching together local, state and federal funds, and all those financing programs all have income restrictions with them, so those are affordable units that they're putting up to replace housing that -- public housing that comes down.

REP. GREEN: Okay. Thank you.

REP. BUTLER: Any other questions?

All right. Thank you.

JEFFREY FREISER: Thank you.

REP. BUTLER: Next, we have Mary-Ann Langton, followed by Kevin Nelson.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: Hello Senator Gomes, Representative Green and the Housing Committee.

HB5372

TRANSLATOR: Hello Senator Gomes, Representative Green and the Housing Committee.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: My name is Mary-Ann Langton.

TRANSLATOR: My name is Mary-Ann Langton.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: And I am a Disability Policy Specialist --

TRANSLATOR: And I am a Disability Policy Specialist --

MARY-ANN LANGTON: -- at the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities.

TRANSLATOR: -- at the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: The Council promotes H.B. 5372 --

TRANSLATOR: The Council promotes H.B. 5372 --

MARY-ANN LANGTON: -- AN ACT FOR ACCESSIBLE HOUSING.

TRANSLATOR: -- AN ACT FOR ACCESSIBLE HOUSING.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: We encourage you to use the concept of --

TRANSLATOR: We encourage you to use the concept of --

MARY-ANN LANGTON: -- visitability housing that would meet everyone's needs.

TRANSLATOR: -- to encourage you to use the concept of visitability housing that would meet everyone's needs.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: There are three features that would make new single- or two-family homes construction be called visitable.

TRANSLATOR: There are three features that would make new single- or two-family homes construction be called visitable.

99
cip/gbr

HOUSING COMMITTEE

March 4, 2010
1:00 P.M.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: These three features are --

TRANSLATOR: These three features are --

MARY-ANN LANGTON: -- one, one zero-step
entrance --

TRANSLATOR: -- one, one zero-step entrance --

MARY-ANN LANGTON: -- two, wider hallways and
doorways --

TRANSLATOR: -- wider hallways and doorways --

MARY-ANN LANGTON: -- and three, one bath on the
main floor with access space for a wheelchair.

TRANSLATOR: -- number three, one bath on the main
floor with access space for a wheelchair.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: Why should you support this?

TRANSLATOR: Why should you support this?

MARY-ANN LANGTON: People will need the features
of --

TRANSLATOR: People will need the features of --

MARY-ANN LANGTON: -- visitability housing as they
begin to age.

TRANSLATOR: -- visitability housing as they begin
to age.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: People will be able to age in
place in their own homes --

TRANSLATOR: People will be able to age in place in
their own homes --

MARY-ANN LANGTON: -- and people with disabilities will be able to live visit their friends.

TRANSLATOR: -- in addition, people with physical disabilities will be able to visit their family and their friends in their visitability housing.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: Thank you.

TRANSLATOR: Thank you very much.

REP. BUTLER: Are there any questions?

MARY-ANN LANGTON: Oh, no.

REP. BUTLER: Representative Green.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: Be nice.

REP. GREEN: Thank you. I -- I will try to be nice. That is a good characteristic that I think we all should try, so thank you, Mary-Ann, for asking me to do that.

First of all, I want to thank you for coming, and I think that a couple things you said -- just a couple of terms that I think this committee will begin to get familiar with, and I think it's being brought out.

One -- a couple -- is -- is the term "visitability," which I'm glad you -- you mentioned what that is. The other one is "age in place." And that's a lot of -- that's a concept that, again, I think the committee and people need to begin to -- to understand that term "age in place," because if we build and encourage this kind of housing, it really is something that you can grow in and live in throughout your stages of your life.

101
cip/gbr

HOUSING COMMITTEE

March 4, 2010
1:00 P.M.

And I think as we've seen people with disabilities, our elders, in order to remove them from the homes, if -- if we had these adjustments in -- in housing in the beginning, believe me, it would cut down on quality rehabilitation and whatever.

I -- I had asked Ms. Denson earlier, had -- Marion, have you had the opportunity to talk to friends and tell them about the issue of visitability, where you say hey, we have this concept where people can, if they build this kind of housing, I could visit. Has she talked -- have you talked to people about that, and have they given you a good response?

MARY-ANN LANGTON: I know I go to my friends --

TRANSLATOR: I know I talk to my friends --

MARY-ANN LANGTON: -- and they are very interested in this.

TRANSLATOR: -- and they are very interested in this.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: Because they feel bad --

TRANSLATOR: Because I feel bad -- no --

MARY-ANN LANGTON: -- they feel bad --

TRANSLATOR: No. Oh, because they feel bad.

REP. GREEN: Yes.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: -- because they want come to my party house --

TRANSLATOR: -- because they want to come to her -- what? -- they want to come to her party house --

102
cip/gbr

HOUSING COMMITTEE

March 4, 2010
1:00 P.M.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: -- because I want to have them
to my house --

TRANSLATOR: Yes. She asks them to come to her
house --

MARY-ANN LANGTON: -- because I can't go to their
house.

TRANSLATOR: -- because she's unable to get into
theirs.

REP. GREEN: Okay. Mary-Ann, can you tell me, do
you use public transportation? How do you get
around mostly with -- with the disabilities
that you have?

MARY-ANN LANGTON: I have my own car.

TRANSLATOR: She has her own car.

REP. GREEN: Okay.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: But I do use public
transportation.

TRANSLATOR: But she does use public
transportation.

REP. GREEN: Oh, okay.

All right. Thank you for coming. One of the
things that I -- I think I'm finding out today
is that these doors are not handicapped
accessible --

MARY-ANN LANGTON: Yes..

REP. GREEN: -- and people can't get in and out of
these conference rooms, and hopefully remind
me to write a note to management and the

legislative management to say we need to be more conscious and aware of the handicaps that we provide for people in this building.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: Thank you.

REP. GREEN: Thank you so much.

MARY-ANN LANGTON: Thank you.

TRANSLATOR: Thank you.

REP. GREEN: Was I nice?

REP. BUTLER: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

TRANSLATOR: And thank you.

REP. BUTLER: All right. Kevin Nelson?

A VOICE: Mr. Nelson had to leave. He has submitted his testimony to the clerk or -- or will be.

REP. BUTLER: Okay. We have next Sally Zanger, followed by Neil Griffin.

SALLY ZANGER: Hello, Representative Green, members of the committee.

Is this thing turned on? Do I have this on? Now I've turned it off. Okay.

My name is Sally Zanger. I'm a lawyer with the Connecticut Legal Rights Project. I am coming today to testify against Proposed Bill Number 5373 regarding THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RESIDENCY FOR TENANTS.

Connecticut Legal Rights Project is a legal services organization that advocates for low

We -- we usually apply these funds towards the remainder of a project that has gone through the predevelopment loan process. And part of the reason for this proposal before you today is that we have been approached by several successful developers -- for-profit developers -- that we have worked on affordable housing projects for, and they've inquired as to the use of these funds for the -- just this purpose, and again, our intent is to incentivize the -- the building of more affordable housing in our state, and that's kind of the reason for bringing it forward to you today.

I'd be happy to entertain any further questions on that or any other sections of the bill.

REP. BUTLER: Are there any questions? Great.
Thank you.

JOSEPH OROS: Great. Thank you.

REP. BUTLER: Next, we'll have Maureen McIntyre, followed by Debbie Bassett.

A VOICE: Good afternoon. Maureen had to leave and asked if I would read you her testimony. May I do so? Thank you.

Good afternoon. My name is Maureen McIntyre, and I'm the Assistant Director of the North Central Area Agency on Aging. I'm grateful to be here today to offer these brief remarks in support of House Bill 5372.

The mission of the North Central Area Agency on Aging is to enhance the quality of life for older adults and their caregivers in the Greater Hartford Region by ensuring that they

have access to quality and cost-effective services.

As aging is a journey and not a destination, we are therefore committed to a vision of community inclusion available to all Connecticut citizens regardless of age or disability. If enacted, House Bill 5372 would ameliorate for future Connecticut citizens an issue of sizable costs and concern for today's elders -- how to remain in their own homes as safely as possible.

I have seen first-hand the difficulty of attempting to renovate existing buildings to accommodate the human condition of aging -- doors and hallways not wide enough, full bathroom upstairs and half bath downstairs, elaborate front steps that are appealing from the curb, but dangerous, if not impossible, for residents, friends, neighbors with walkers, canes and wheelchairs.

At my agency, we hear from folks unable to remain in their own homes because the cost of these renovations are prohibitive. Many of these individuals will move if they can afford it. Many will put their belongings in storage. Many will sell personal effects that will not fit into their new downsized lifestyle. Still others will go to nursing homes.

The efficacy of home and community-based services is dependent upon our ability to keep consumers in their homes and in the community. The beauty of House Bill 5372 is that it provides hope for a better future. It acknowledges that we all deserve to age in place with grace and dignity.

It acknowledges that homes are more than four walls that protect us from the elements. It provides a logical framework for reenvisioning community. And therein lies perhaps the most important concept. Through this bill -- though this bill has been championed tirelessly by Independents Unlimited and despite the fact that many organizations from the aging community are here today to provide support as well, in truth, this bill is for all of us.

And so I thank Representative Ken Green for his vision and for having the courage to challenge the existing paradigm. In the land of city (inaudible), we need to recognize and seize upon those opportunities that will contribute to the greater good. House Bill 5372 does exactly that.

REP. BUTLER: Questions?

Thank you.

Next is Debbie Bassett.

DEBORAH BASSETT: Good afternoon members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify before you today on Bill Number 5372, AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESSIBLE HOUSING.

My name is Deborah Bassett, and I'm currently a graduate student at the UCONN School of Social Work. I am here today advocating for housing that is accessible to people with disabilities.

There are -- there are three features that will make homes more accessible or visitable to everyone, and these include one zero-step entrance, interior doors that provide at least

32 inches of unobstructed passage space, and at least a half bathroom on the main floor.

These features make homes easier for people who develop a mobility impairment to visit friends and extended family rather than having to turn down invitations or not be invited at all.

These features also provide a basic shell of access to permit formerly nondisabled people to remain in their homes if they do develop a disability rather than forcing them to do expensive renovations or relocate to a different house, live in an unaccessible home, which endangers their health and safety or move from the community into a nursing home.

In addition, these three features make fiscal sense for society as a whole. For instance, the average cost for one year of nursing home care exceeds \$50,000 per person, more than 60 percent of which is paid for with public dollars.

Sale and resale of these homes is enhanced in an era where the senior demographic is growing rapidly and baby boomers are attracted to homes that welcome their aging parents and provide easy-use homes for themselves. These features cost little up front, unlike the higher after-the-fact cost of renovation for widening doors and adding ramps.

I am fully in favor of incentives that will entice builders to put in more accessible features in 25 percent of the -- 25 percent of the homes that they build in the future, as this will certainly help the lack of minimally accessible housing that exists today.

I am grateful to Representative Green for showing his support and for bringing this much needed proposal to the Housing Committee for their endorsement as a first step towards a future of full inclusion for all people.

Thank you for your time.

REP. BUTLER: Are there any questions?

Thank you for your testimony.

DEBORAH BASSETT: Thank you.

REP. BUTLER: Next, we're going to have Elizabeth Besette, followed by Attorney Eppler-Epstein.

ELIZABETH BESSETTE: Chairs and members of the Housing Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. My name is Elizabeth Besette, and I am a graduate student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work.

I am presently working on the Southeastern Connecticut Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, which includes the cities of Norwich and New London and the surrounding towns. I am here to speak to you today about House Bill 5374, AN ACT CONCERNING PROMOTING AND SUSTAINING AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN CONNECTICUT.

While staffing a Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, we work towards the goal of developing affordable and permanent supportive housing units to provide adequate shelter for those in our region who are struggling.

The need for affordable housing is felt by many different kinds of people, including families, single individuals, those who are

177

March 4, 2010

cip/gbr

HOUSING COMMITTEE

1:00 P.M.

REP. GREEN: Fred has?

A VOICE: (Inaudible).

REP. GREEN: Okay.

REP. BUTLER: Okay..

REP. GREEN: So Fred will work with you, because I know you have been in contact with him.

A VOICE: Yes.

REP. GREEN: And we will try to have the questions answered --

A VOICE: Yes.

REP. GREEN: -- that we best can.

A VOICE: (Inaudible).

REP. GREEN: Okay.

A VOICE: All right. Thank you very much.

REP. GREEN: Yes.

REP. BUTLER: All right. Hello Stan.

STAN KOSLOSKI: Hello. My name is Stan Kosloski, and I'm the Executive Director of the Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative. Bill Wash, who was scheduled to testify, he waited all afternoon and then ten minutes before his name was called, he had to leave, but he has written a book, Home Planning for Your Later Years, that he brought with -- with him, and he asked me if I'd share it with the committee, so I'll give it to Fred after I testify.

HB 5372

I'm going to dispense -- I do have written testimony that you have, but I'm going to dispense with that and try to focus in on a couple things relating to questions that came up earlier. One of -- one of the things I would -- I would recommend, that we talked about the term and the confusion maybe between the term "accessible" and "visitable." So there is a definition of "visitable."

Last year, a national standards organization called ANSI came up with a standard. The ANSI standards are used by a lot of states in their building codes. But they came up with a specific ANSI standard for what they call Type C units, which are visitable units. So my suggestion would be that instead of using the term "accessible" in the bill, it -- it -- use -- use the term "visitable" and then reference this standard.

And I did give -- you do have copies of that for you all to take a look at. Yes. That's it. You do have copies of that to take a look at and see if it -- if it fits. But that, I think, will accomplish the -- the goal that were -- that were set about today.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that the term "multi-family units" is used in the proposed legislation, and there is a certain degree of accessibility currently required in multi-family units, so I -- again, I just don't know whether that term was intended or not, but the interest of those that are promoting this visitability has been in the single-family and the two-family homes that are not currently now covered under any of our codes of statutes.

The third thing is the question about the West Hartford ordinance. I did a little digging

into this, and this is -- this is what I found out. Sharon Denson, who testified earlier, was the Chair of the West Hartford Disability Commission, and they wanted to introduce a local ordinance that would promote or require -- I'm not exactly sure how far it went -- that would require visitability in single-family homes in West Hartford.

They ran into a legal roadblock with the state building code. And so we were kind of puzzled as to what that was all about. And apparently in state statute -- the state statute says that -- something to the effect that accessibility standards do not apply to one -- single- and two-family homes.

So -- and that makes sense, because, you know, perhaps they shouldn't, but what -- what it does is it prevents a local community like West Hartford from doing an ordinance because they would be -- the ordinance would be contradictory to the state statute.

So when I talked to the state building inspector about it, she said that -- I mean, the term she used was "wild, wild west." Her concern was that she didn't want the -- want various towns to come up with their own ordinances, which each town would be different for every other town, and it would be impossible to administer that kind of situation.

So I don't know if there is a problem that can be resolved with the state building inspector. I know she's very open to discussion. She has come to several of the meetings of the group that has planned -- has been pursuing visitability.

So I'm sure if there is a way of addressing any of these concerns through the state building code, she would be open to it, but I thought that might explain the dilemma a little bit, because on the surface, it sort of sounds kind of strange. A local community wants to do more than what it's required to do, and they're being prevented from doing it. And apparently that's -- that's the reason.

And then the last thing I would just mention very quickly is something I said this morning, and that is when we talk about accessibility, sometimes people have this image in their mind about what accessibility or what visitability might look like, and I use the term "invisible" when I'm -- when I'm referring to visitability, because it -- it -- a -- a visitable home is not going to look any different than any other home. The -- the changes are very subtle.

There was an architect who uses a wheelchair that was going to try to testify today, and he said what he's done when he's -- when he's designed some single-family homes, without even telling the owner, he's just built in visitable features, and the -- and the owner didn't realize, you know, that the doors were two inches wider or the hallway was a little bit wider.

But years down the road, the -- the homeowner would come back to him and said, "You know, we didn't -- we didn't know you did this, but now we're glad that you did, because one of us now is disabled or has some mobility issues and can get around a lot more -- a lot more easily."

So I wanted to dispel that notion, I guess, that -- that many people have is that if it's

accessible or visitable, it's got to look different or weird or strange, and people, you know, don't want, they want everything -- they want their home to fit in, and that -- that certainly can be done.

So I'd be glad to answer any other questions that you might have, and I want to thank, by the way, all of you for staying. Very, very sincerely appreciate staying here for the afternoon with all of us, because I know other committees, the attendance isn't always as good as this committee is, so I think we all appreciate that.

REP. BUTLER: Any questions?

Representative Green.

REP. GREEN: Thank you. And we have all of our members who are very cordial and nice and -- and they -- they have wonderful personalities.

A VOICE: That's right.

REP. GREEN: And we never want to intimidate our -- our guests.

Stan, thank you for coming.

This -- this is somewhat of a new concept across the country. Atlanta started it early through -- through some advocacy. Vermont seemed to have -- passed some legislation that seemed to be more progressive than other states. And unfortunately we didn't hear from a developer who I think is beginning to -- to embrace this concept just kind of like on their -- on their own or on his own.

What are some of the drawbacks -- what are -- what are some of the things you're hearing

from developers or -- or anyone in terms of -- of cost? Why does this can't be done or why are we doing this? What are -- what are some of the negatives? I mean, we've heard. I -- I fully embrace it, but I also want to think about okay, who's going to hit me with a negative --

STAN KOSLOSKI: Right.

REP. GREEN: -- or what is it going to be.

STAN KOSLOSKI: Right. Right. Well, I -- I don't -- I don't know there have been any negatives. One of the concerns that -- that have been expressed is that -- and I'm not a builder or, you know, I'm not in the field -- but the concern about the -- the no step entry is that if you don't do it right, the water -- you know, if you don't control how the water gets at the foundation of the house or the wood side of the house, that -- that you can -- you can -- it can create structural problems for the home, but I know that the builders that have built the visitable homes, there's a way around that.

There's -- there are designs that you can incorporate that I can't begin to explain. But I know that there's -- there's a way around that problem, but that's been one of the problems. I don't think that there have -- I think it's mostly a lack of understanding or maybe assuming that we're talking about something that we're not.

You know, we're not talking about putting grab bars all over the place or, you know, cutting -- having cutouts under sinks. We're just talking about some very basic things. It's mostly been this -- the need to educate a variety of different audiences.

REP. GREEN: You and I have talked about costs. Has -- has that been a -- and again, some of the issue around this is that, you know, could legislation try to incur some incentives to build this? How realistic do you think the costs might be and have people talked about this -- the costs of these sources over and have we really (inaudible).

STAN KOSLOSKI: Well, again, once they understand -- I think the -- the -- going from a -- a 30-inch door to a 32-inch door, I mean, I've been told that that's -- it doesn't cost any more to do that. The hallways -- making sure the hallways -- I think in the visitability standards that you have, the hallways are at minimum 36 inches.

I think 42 inches width is the optimal, but I believe the standards that I -- that I submitted were -- called for 36. So that's not really making that much bigger. It's mostly going to be the -- the sort of -- and so much depends on the topography of the land.

I mean, if you've got a flat surface, it's very easy to just grade. Again, you can make that entrance to the front. You can make it to the back. You could even make that one no step entrance from the garage. So there's those three different options for making that.

So if it isn't going to work to the front of the house, maybe it might work to the back or it might work through the garage. And the best that I can -- I mean, if -- if -- what I've been -- the research that I've done is that if it's -- if it's a relatively flat level of land, it's basically \$500 or less to provide the accessibility.

And again, once you get into sloping hills and -- and that sort of thing, it can be -- it can be up to -- I've -- I've seen one estimate of up to \$1200 for that, -- to provide that no step entry. But again, when you're looking about something that's 200,000 or \$300,000, less than \$1,000 is not much at all.

REP. BUTLER: Any other questions?

Thank you.

STAN KOSLOSKI: Thank you.

REP. BUTLER: Thank you for your patience and waiting around here until this hour to testify.

Is Sherry here? How about Jesmin Basanti?
Susan. Okay. Who's left to -- come on.

SUSAN SALTERS: Well, my notes said "good afternoon," but it's "good evening," Chairman Green, members of the General Assembly Committee on Housing and other interested parties that are still here.

My name is Susan Salters. I'm a resident of Coventry, but I work as -- as an advocate and a community inclusion specialist at Independence Unlimited, a center for -- of -- a center for independent living here in Hartford. That's where we help people with disabilities to try to remain living in the community.

I'm here today to speak to you about Raised Bill Number 5372, AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESSIBLE HOUSING, and why I am in favor of this legislation as a concrete step towards the true community inclusion for people with disabilities in mainstream American life.

First, I want to thank State Representative Kenneth Green for bringing this bill before the committee for your consideration and for suggesting creative incentives for private contractors to build homes with increased accessibility from now on.

In my role as facilitator of the North Central Area Disability Advocacy Network, Representative Green contacted me when he became aware that NCADAN had been working diligently towards encouraging accessible housing. For the past couple of years, our group has been working on bringing the idea of visitability to the people of Connecticut, and I won't go into the description of visitability. You've heard that today.

Visitability is a social movement that has spread nationwide and even overseas as people discover the advantages of designing and building homes with everyone in mind. The British Parliament enacted nationwide legislation back in 1998 mandating accessibility, and before our own Congress is House Bill 1408 that is also considering accessibility as necessary to the welfare of American citizens.

Considering the aging baby boom population of the United States, along with veterans returning from the war with permanent injuries and the frail elderly isolated from their families in nursing facilities, making accessibility essential in the residential construction in single-family homes is -- just makes sense.

In my research on the subject of visitability, opponents have declared that adding these three features to new homes is costly and that there isn't a market for these types of

houses. But I feel there's many other costs, both tangible and intangible, to not building with accessibility that needs to be weighed into this argument.

Figured in should be the cost in time, money, materials and aggravation involved in remodeling a home after someone becomes suddenly disabled. We have folks calling our agency from time to time who have become suddenly disabled and their family members are carrying them one and two flights of stairs.

It's not something you want to have happen after you've just become disabled. There's also the cost to our -- our environment of adding used building materials to our landfills when this dumping could have been avoided. Then there are the substantial federal healthcare costs of individuals taking up premature residence in nursing facilities due to structural barriers in the home.

But more than material costs is the impact on our society and neighborhoods where stability, diversity and civic engagement is decreased proportionate to the numbers of individuals that leave or are left out of daily life. Inaccessible housing also creates costly risks to individuals when first responders answering emergency calls can't get equipment to the victim or out of the door.

We know that the elderly are at greater risk of falling in their homes. Could it be because the doorway is too narrow for their walker, scooter or wheelchair to fit through so they opted to go out by themselves? Consider, too, the cost of quality of life and the increase in depression experienced by people isolated from others because of inaccessible home design.

But public policy should not be based solely on financial gain or polarized debate. It should be decided on by careful consideration of the overall benefit to the citizens of our state -- all the citizens of our state, not singularly the young, strong or able bodies.

In your deliberations about this bill, consider who in your own family may need safe passageway into their home or may need the use of assistive technology to get around -- if not now, perhaps in the near future. Will that family member be able to join in Thanksgiving dinner or will there be an empty place setting because your house was not accessible?

Thank you for your time today, and I hope you ponder this proposal carefully. And please feel free to ask me any questions.

REP. BUTLER: Are there any questions?

Representative Green.

REP. GREEN: Thank you. And thank you, Sue, for staying, I -- I -- you were here for the press conference, and I was surprised you were down so low on the list. I -- I don't know what happened on that communication.

SUSAN SALTERS: They put other people before me.

REP. GREEN: Okay. But thank you again, and one of the things that -- that I'm wondering is that when we -- when we talk about focusing maybe early on in the stages of visitability for single- and two-family homes, I also want to make sure that folks can afford those homes, so I -- I don't necessarily want to just see

188
cip/gbr

HOUSING COMMITTEE

March 4, 2010
1:00 P.M.

this in homes that are 200, 250,000, \$300 homes. You know, maybe some starter homes.

So maybe that, so I -- I just want to make sure that your efforts are for all of the single-family homes. So it's not necessarily that, you know, when you build new homes in suburban communities, they should have it, but not only should we build housing for people of different incomes, but the visitability really should be in all of those types of housing. Is that what you guys are advocating?

SUSAN SALTERS: Well, my thinking on this, and this is a personal opinion, is -- is that we're putting accessibility into single-family homes is going to have folks who can't afford single-family homes moving into those homes and out of the rental units that are now accessible, because those are also in short supply. So as we increase the single-family homes with accessibility, we may increase more openings in the rental accessible housing that is so in short supply.

REP. GREEN: Now, is your testimony here, because I --

A VOICE: Yes.

REP. GREEN: -- I think you made some very good points, and, okay I just found it so got to make sure I use it for reference. Thank you.

SUSAN SALTERS: Thank you very much.

REP. BUTLER: Any other questions?

SUSAN SALTERS: Any other questions?

REP. BUTLER: Thank you.

project that you're talking about, would that satisfied in today's criteria?

FRANK MCLAUGHLIN: It would -- it would satisfy today's criteria, and -- and we do -- under the House New London houses, that -- we do -- we are required to follow those guidelines. Yes, ma'am.

REP. BUTLER: Any other questions?

Thank you very much for your testimony.

FRANK MCLAUGHLIN: Thank you, sir.

REP. BUTLER: And finally, we have Susan Remano.

SUSAN REMANDO: Remando.

REP. BUTLER: Remando, excuse me.

SUSAN REMANDO: That's okay.

Good evening, Senator Gomes, Representative Butler, distinguished members of the Select Committee on Housing.

HB5312

My name is Susan Remando. I am the Senior Director of Advocacy of Programs for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society Connecticut Chapter. The National MS Society has offices in Hartford and Norwalk, and we are serving over 6,000 people who live with MS and their families in our state.

I also come to this as a personal perspective. I'm the Family Caregiver Representative to the Connecticut Long-Term Care Advisory Council, and I also serve on the Money Follows the Person Steering Committee. I've been working in the field of disability for over 30 years.

Personally, I am also impacted by the needs of people with disabilities. My husband has MS. He's had it for our entire marriage. We've been together for over 20 years. And my mother had MS. So I come to this from a variety of perspectives. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on -- on the issues of MS -- what it is. It's in my testimony.

But I really want to emphasize the importance of H.B. 5372, AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESSIBLE HOUSING. Our organization works with a number of organizations both locally and nationally that are proponents and supporters of affordable and accessible housing. Today, you heard from representatives from organizations like Independence Unlimited, the Disability Advocacy Collaborative of Connecticut, and they have given you, I believe, a few recommendations for legislation.

One of the things that we're asking under H.B. 5372, is that homes be made visitable. Basically, what that means is that homes would have, particularly new construction, would have flat entrances, wider doors, have a bathroom that a wheelchair can fit into. It's not asking for a lot, and frankly it's -- it's common sense to help people to age in place.

One of the hardest things that over the years of -- of living with disability in my family and -- and just talking with people with MS is that it's -- one of the -- the most important things is being able to be out there in the community, be independent, be able to go visit friends and family, go to things like the movies.

Granted, the Americans with Disabilities Act has done some wonderful things for the public buildings, but in many cases, private homes --

family and friends -- you want to be able to go there and visit. And -- and this bill provides options for making homes visitable. And I just want to emphasize how important that is.

In the case of MS, seven and a half -- seven and a half times -- people with MS have a seven and a half times amount of suicide. Depression, suicide, all the kinds of things that we don't want to have in this world can in many ways be helped by things like reducing social isolation. And a lot of folks, when you talk with them, they're so isolated.

This is just one piece of the puzzle, and I hope that the committee will support this bill. Again, there -- I think there was some confusion when it was written. Really, what we're looking for is visitability, which is not nearly as strict as full-blown accessibility. And I -- I hope that you'll support it and move it forward.

REP. BUTLER: Thank you.

Are there any questions?

Representative Lambert.

REP. LAMBERT: And it's so important, because for your self-esteem. I -- I know --

SUSAN REMANDO: Yes.

REP. LAMBERT: I had to move from Brooklyn, Connecticut, into my dad's house, and it was a small house, and it was so degrading because --

SUSAN REMANDO: It is.

198
cip/gbr

HOUSING COMMITTEE

March 4, 2010
1:00 P.M.

REP. LAMBERT: -- I had to help him into the bathroom, and -- and I -- the impact on -- on your holidays.

SUSAN REMANDO: Yes.

REP. LAMBERT: I mean, we had to feed him downstairs at my son's house. You know, I mean, all of these things --

SUSAN REMANDO: Yes.

REP. LAMBERT: -- because there was only a bathroom there. But, you know, one of the public things that upset me, we have post offices --

SUSAN REMANDO: Yes.

REP. LAMBERT: -- in Milford, Connecticut, we --

SUSAN REMANDO: Oh, my goodness.

REP. LAMBERT: -- we have a post office, and I'm sure maybe you were one of the marchers there, but we have a post office, because it's private, there's no accessibility for a person to come into their own post office. So, I mean, you know, this is far reaching but I --

SUSAN REMANDO: We still have a long way to go --

REP. LAMBERT: We have a long way to go --

SUSAN REMANDO: -- there's no doubt -- oh, I'm --
I'm not --

REP. LAMBERT: -- because when you can't go to your post office, that's that.

SUSAN REMANDO: Well, there's a lot of places you still can't go, but in terms of -- in your own community, the ability to visit family and

friends is crucial and -- and again -- and it's exciting because this provides for some incentives. And my husband, about -- now -- about 15 years ago, we worked on a -- a project where we helped other folks get grab bars and things like that put into their house, and it -- it makes all the difference in the world.

I can't tell you now how many folks we hear from who are just stuck in the lower levels of their home and -- and even if they can get out somewhere, they can't go anywhere, because they can't get there or they can't get in where they want to go. So it -- it really -- this is a -- a nice approach to starting to address it. We do have a long way.

Thank you, Representative, but I just -- I want to commend you for doing this and urge you to move it forward.

REP. BUTLER: Thank you.

Any other questions?

SUSAN REMANDO: Thank you.

REP. BUTLER: Great. Thank you.

Is there anyone left to testify? Sure? Okay, well --

A VOICE: (Inaudible).

REP. BUTLER: -- entertain a motion to adjourn?

Okay, we have a motion to second to adjourn? All in favor, aye.

VOICES: Aye.



"Enhancing the quality of life for older adults in North Central Connecticut by ensuring that they have access to quality and cost-effective services."

151 NEW PARK AVENUE, Box 75
HARTFORD, CT 06106

PHONE: 860.724.6443 / 1.800.994.9422
FAX: 860.251.6107

Testimony delivered March 4, 2010 in support of Bill 5372-An Act Concerning Accessible Housing

Good afternoon, my name is Maureen McIntyre and I am the Assistant Director of the North Central Area Agency on Aging here in Hartford.

The mission of the North Central Area Agency on Aging is to enhance the quality of life for older adults and their caregivers in the Greater Hartford Region by ensuring that they have access to quality and cost-effective services. As aging is a journey and not a destination, we are therefore committed to a vision of community inclusion available to all of Connecticut's citizens regardless of age or disability.

If enacted, Bill 5372 would ameliorate for future Connecticut citizens an issue of sizable cost and concern for today's elders: how to remain in their own homes as safely as possible.

I have seen first-hand the difficulty of attempting to renovate existing dwellings to accommodate the human condition of aging.

- ✓ Doorways and hallways not wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair that wasn't needed a year ago.
- ✓ Full bathrooms upstairs and the half-bath downstairs; inaccessible to homeowners with mobility issues
- ✓ Elaborate front steps that are quite appealing from the curb but dangerous if not impossible for residents, friends, and neighbors, with walkers, canes and wheelchairs.

At my agency we hear from folks unable to remain in their homes because the costs of these renovations are prohibitive. Many of these individuals will move, if they can afford it. Many will put their belongings in storage. Many will sell personal affects that will not fit into their new "downsized" lifestyle. Still others will go to nursing homes. The efficacy of *home and community based services* is dependent upon our ability to keep consumers in their homes, and in the community.

The beauty of Bill 5372 is that it provides hope for a better future. It acknowledges that that we all deserve to age in place with grace and dignity. It acknowledges that homes are more than the four walls that protect us from the elements. It provides a logical framework for re-envisioning community. And therein lies perhaps the most important concept: though this bill has been championed tirelessly by Independence Unlimited, one of the five Centers for Independent Living in Connecticut, and despite the fact that many organizations from the aging community are here today to provide support as well, in truth, this bill is for all of us.

And so I thank Representative Ken Green for his vision and for having the courage to challenge the existing paradigm. In the land of steady habits, we need to recognize and to seize upon those opportunities that will contribute to the greater good. Bill 5372 does exactly that.

I thank you so very much for your time.

Most sincerely,

Maureen C. McIntyre

Assistant Director

North Central Area Agency on Aging



**CONNECTICUT
CONFERENCE OF
MUNICIPALITIES**

900 Chapel St., 9th Floor, New Haven, Connecticut 06510-2807
Phone (203) 498-3000 • Fax (203) 562-6314 • www.ccm-ct.org

THE VOICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

TESTIMONY
of the
CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES
to the
HOUSING COMMITTEE
March 4, 2010

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 90% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate this opportunity to testify before you on issues of concern to towns and cities.

Raised House Bill 5372, "An Act Concerning Accessible Housing."

HB 5372 would exempt, from the property tax rolls, selected privately developed housing for the physically disabled single and multifamily residential developments.

While CCM appreciates language in the bill requiring the state to reimburse municipalities for 100% of the property taxes lost as a result of this exemption, tough economic times means the State has been unwilling to maintain previous funding commitments, forcing increases in Connecticut's largest and most unfair tax - the property tax. The hard facts are clear:

- **PILOT payments for state-mandated tax-exempt property** of the State and of private colleges and hospitals were cut by \$14 million from FY 08-09 for each year of the biennium. The reimbursement rate for State property has fallen from 41% in FY 02 to 33% this year and the reimbursement rate for private colleges and hospitals from 73% in FY 02 to 54% this year.
- **Pequot-Mohegan grants** provided as much as \$135 million annually from FY 1998 to FY 02. This year, slashed again, they will provide just \$61.8 million. At its inception, municipalities received 78% of these slot-machine revenues - this year they will receive just 16%.

CCM urges the state to ensure that municipalities will be reimbursed no less than 100% of the lost revenue as a result of this new property tax exemption.

##

If you have any questions, please contact Donna Hamzy, Legislative Associate
via email dhamzy@ccm-ct.org or via phone (203) 498-3000.



**Testimony of AARP, on H.B. 5372, AAC Accessible Housing
Housing Committee
March 4, 2010**

AARP is a nonprofit, non-partisan membership organization that serves people 50 and older. We have approximately 40 million members nationwide and over 600,000 in Connecticut. AARP supports voluntary incentive programs that encourage the development of "visitable" housing. Visitability features are a component of universal design; they address access to the main part of the house, such as wide doorways, a zero-step entrance, and access to a toilet facility. These features provide benefits to household members and enable others with mobility limitations to visit the resident. AARP supports H.B. 5372 and the goal of creating accessible housing through incentives.

Current trends in health care and community services emphasize aging in place. However, the structural barriers in much of existing housing can prevent older adults and people with disabilities from leading independent lives and fully participating in the community. Many houses have steps to all entrances, narrow doorways, long and narrow hallways and lack an accessible bathroom on the main floor. Although an overwhelming majority of Americans age 50+ (89%) want to stay in their homes for as long as they can,¹ these features make it difficult for them to do so. Architectural barriers also make it difficult for nondisabled individuals to accommodate visits from older friends and relatives, who need basic accessibility.

To address these concerns, H.B. 5372 would provide incentives to promote visitability. Visitability provides individuals the choice to age in place in their own homes. Visitability also allows individuals with physical limitations to visit the homes of family or friends, decreasing social isolation.

Advances in visitability can contribute greatly to the quality of life for all, at a relatively low cost. In fact, visitability standards can be achieved for as little as \$500. Moreover, encouraging visitable housing could actually save money in the long-run by ensuring that older individuals are not prematurely placed in nursing facilities.

¹ Providing More Long-term Support and Services at Home: Why It's Critical for Health Care Reform. AARP Public Policy Institute, June 2009.



Connecticut Association of Centers for Independent Living
 151 New Park Ave. Suite 106, Hartford, CT 06106
 voice 860-656-0430 fax 860-656-0496
 www.cacil.net

*...Working for the full integration, independence, and civil rights of people with disabilities
 through Centers for Independent Living*

Testimony of Gary Waterhouse, Executive Director

CT Association of Centers for Independent Living

March 4, 2010

Housing Committee Public Hearing

Center for Disability Rights
 764A Campbell Ave.
 West Haven, CT 06516
 V 203-934-7077
 TDD 203-934-7079

Disabilities Network of
 Eastern CT
 238 West Town Street
 Norwich, CT 06360
 V/TDD 860-823-1898

Disability Resource Center
 of Fairfield County
 80 Ferry Boulevard
 Suite 210
 Stratford, CT 06497
 V 203-378-6977
 TDD 203-378-3248

Independence Northwest
 1183 New Haven Rd.
 Naugatuck, CT 06770
 V 203-729-3299
 TDD 203-729-1281

Independence Unlimited
 Suite D
 151 New Park Avenue
 Hartford, CT 06106
 V/TDD 860-523-5021

H.B. No. 5372 AAC ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

SUPPORT- CACIL and the disability community strongly supports a property tax exception for increased **Accessibility** and **Visitability** in new housing. We believe that three (3) features make homes more accessible to everyone.

- One (1) zero step entrance (could be through a garage)
- Wider hallways and doorways

Doorways- 32" of unobstructed passage

Hallways- 42" optimum

- One bath on the main floor with room for a wheelchair

HB 5372 will provide the incentive of a property tax exemption to developers to build **ACCESSIBLE** and **VISITABLE** housing. Municipalities would be reimbursed by a state grant in lieu of taxes.

Most existing and new housing, even in the wealthiest nations, lack basic accessible features unless the designated, immediate occupant of a home currently has a disability. However, there are some initiatives to change typical residential practices so that new homes incorporate basic access features such as zero-step entries and door widths adequate for wheelchairs to pass through.

Great Britain applies the most widespread application of home access to date. In 1999, Parliament passed Section M, an amendment to residential building regulations requiring basic access in all new homes. In the United States, the 1988 Amendments to the Fair Housing Act added people with disabilities, as well as familial status, to the classes already protected by

law from discrimination (race, color, gender, religion, creed, and country of origin). Among the protection for people with disabilities in the 1988 Amendments are seven construction requirements for all multifamily buildings of more than four units first occupied after March 13, 1991. These seven requirements are as follows:

1. An accessible building entrance on an accessible route,
2. Accessible common and public use areas,
3. Doors usable by a person in a wheelchair,
4. Accessible route into and through the dwelling unit,
5. Light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats and other environmental controls in accessible locations,
6. Reinforced walls in bathrooms for later installation of grab bars, and
7. Usable kitchens and bathrooms.

Access is typically defined within the limits of what a person sitting in a wheelchair is able to reach with arm movement only, with minimal shifting of the legs and torso. Lighting and thermostat controls should not be above and power outlets should not be below the reach of a person in a wheelchair.

Sinks and cooking areas typically need to be designed without cupboards below them, to permit the legs of the wheelchair user to roll underneath, and countertops may be of reduced height to accommodate a sitting rather than standing user. In some cases two food preparation areas may be combined into a single kitchen to permit both standing and wheelchair users.

In spite of these advancements, the housing types where most people in the United States reside—single-family homes—are not covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Fair Housing Act, or any other federal law with the exception of the small percentage of publicly-funded homes impacted by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. As a result, the great majority of new single-family homes replicate the barriers in existing homes.

The broad concept of Universal Design is relevant to housing, as it is to all aspects of the built environment. Furthermore, a Visitability movement begun by grass roots disability advocates in the 1980s focuses specifically on changing construction practices in new housing. This movement, a network of interested people working in their locales, works on educating, passing laws, and spurring voluntary home access initiatives with the intention that basic access become a routine part of new home construction.



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Connecticut Chapter
659 Tower Avenue, First Floor
Hartford, CT 06112-1269
tel +1.860.913.2550
fax +1.860.761.2466
www.ctfightsMS.org

Testimony in support of HB 5372, An Act Concerning Accessible Housing

Senator Gomes, Representative Green, and Distinguished Members of the Select Committee on Housing,

My name is Susan Raimondo and I am the Senior Director of Advocacy and Programs for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Connecticut Chapter. The National MS Society has offices in Hartford and Norwalk. We serve over 6,000 individuals living with multiple sclerosis and their families in Connecticut.

I am also the family care giver representative to the CT Long Term Care Advisory Council and I serve on the Money Follows the Person Steering Committee. I have been involved in advocacy, providing services and in policy development assisting elders and persons with disabilities for over 30 years in our state. Personally I am also impacted by the issues of accessibility and "visitability." My husband has MS and has used a wheelchair for the past 17 years.

Multiple sclerosis is a chronic disease of the central nervous system. The cause is yet unknown, and there is no cure. The symptoms—including fatigue, impaired ambulation, visual disturbances, bowel and bladder problems, cognitive changes, and more—vary from one individual to another and for any given individual over time.

MS is an often-disabling disease most often diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 50. However, MS is not a fatal disease and a vast majority of people have a normal life expectancy. When someone lives most of their life with this disease, it makes the need for "normal life" activity even more important.

Many people with multiple sclerosis rely on the technology of wheelchairs, scooters, and other devices or medical equipment to get out of the house, go to work, contribute to the community, run errands, and simply enjoy life.

The National MS Society supports HB 5372, An Act Concerning Accessible Housing. Our organization works with a number of the organizations nationally and locally here in Connecticut that are proponents of the availability of housing that is affordable and accessible.

Our colleagues at Independence Unlimited and the Disability Advocacy Collaborative of Connecticut have a few recommendations for this legislation and we would like to suggest that the Select Committee on Housing work with these groups to strengthen the bill. Their suggestions make sense and will enhance the bill.

National MS Society testimony, HB 5372
Continued....

The suggestions include:

1. Making homes "Visitable", meaning that just 3 features will make the homes more accessible to everyone
 These features include:
 - One zero step entrance (could be through garage)
 - Wider hallways and doorways
 Doorways - 32" of unobstructed passage
 Hallways - 42" optimum
 - One bath on the main floor with room for a wheelchair
2. Focusing only in newly constructed single family or two family homes
 - Codes/laws already cover multifamily or multistory buildings
3. Need to be forward thinking about home building to meet the needs of Connecticut residents in the future
4. All reasonable public policy changes should not be governed by cost alone (although the cost of the three features noted above can be as little as \$500)

Some of the most positive aspects of this legislation are that it:

- **Allows individuals with mobility disabilities to visit the homes of family or friends, decreasing social isolation**
- **Increases social capital and neighborhood diversity**
- **Improves civic engagement and community inclusion**
- **Promotes integration of people with disabilities, including elders**
- **Decreases housing discrimination**
- **Causes a decrease in State Medicaid spending**
- **Funds could be reallocated when home modifications are not needed**
 - **nursing home care is not the only choice**
- **Increases safety and access by first responders in emergencies**

As a professional working with people with disabilities and also as a family member of someone with a physical disability, I know that one of the most frustrating and difficult parts about living with a physical disability is that individuals want to be able to participate in the community but yet there are often "significant mountains" in the way. Many of these may only be a few inches high, but they totally restrict access to participating and contributing to the community.

For people with MS, depression is a huge problem. In fact individuals with MS have a rate of suicide that is 7.5 times higher than other individuals living with illnesses.

One of the most common ways to help alleviate some of the situational depression in people with MS is to reduce social isolation. Yet we know of many individuals who remain isolated simply because they cannot get out of their homes or even if they can, they are isolated and are unable to visit friends and family because they cannot get into their loved ones homes.

This legislation offers hope for many. Please pass this legislation.
 Thank you.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY FOR
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
60B WESTON STREET, HARTFORD, CT 06120-1551

JAMES D. McGAUGHEY
Executive Director

Phone: 1/860-297-4307
Confidential Fax: 1/860-297-4305

Testimony of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities
Before the Housing Committee

Submitted by: James D. McGaughey
Executive Director
March 4, 2010

Thank you for this opportunity to comment favorably on **Raised Bill 5372, An Act Concerning Accessible Housing.**

Over the past several years, our Office has been contacted by hundreds of people seeking information on the availability of accessible housing. They contacted us even though we are not a housing referral agency because they had looked everywhere and were desperate. Some were people who had recently acquired disabilities and could no longer live in their inaccessible homes, some had been living in institutional settings and wanted to move out into their own homes; others were parents raising children with disabilities, children who are getting bigger and heavier to carry up and down the stairs; yet others were looking to relocate because they wanted to pursue a promotional opportunity in their work, or because of a family need, or for any of the dozens of other reasons people need to move.

We hear about the shortage from other sources as well: participants in public forums we hold around the State to help us set service priorities; agencies we partner with that help people move out of nursing homes; and other service providers who are trying to help people "age in place" in their communities rather than have to move to congregate care facilities. There is no question that finding accessible housing is a problem in all parts of the State – urban and suburban and rural, east and west. And the shortage is especially acute for families. Much of the accessible housing that does exist assumes is for individuals – a one-bedroom flat. It is not unusual for a single person with a disability – even a person with a good income and other personal resources – to spend six to twelve months searching for an accessible apartment or condo. But families with many members – families that need lots of bedrooms and bathrooms – may look for years and still not find anything suitable.

Our Building Code requires that at least some accessible and adaptable units be constructed in new, larger multi-family housing developments. But there is no code requirement for accessibility in single family or two-family homes. As so much of Connecticut housing is comprised of these types of homes, this is a major limitation. There is considerable resistance to requiring that newly constructed homes meet accessibility requirements. Part of that resistance lies with cost factors – it often takes more floor space to meet accessibility requirements, and therefore often requires a slightly bigger building, or more exterior grading and landscaping to support ramped entrances. But part of it is just a matter of convention. For instance, for the past

several hundred years New Englanders have built their homes with a step up to their entryways. The idea was to keep melting snow from draining back under the doors. Good idea. Except that now, with good design and modern materials, we know how to prevent that from occurring without insisting on a step up to get into a house.

In fact, some New England states have moved to incorporate the concept of "visitability" of newly constructed single family homes. Visitability means that a person with a mobility disability can visit – get into a home through an accessible entrance, follow an accessible path of travel, and use a first floor bathroom. And, by the way, it also means that if someone living in that home develops a disability, they probably won't have to abruptly sell their home and move out, possibly to an expensive nursing home which they may never leave. So the social, and even the economic benefits are considerable.

This bill represents an affirmative attempt to do something about this major problem. It does not mandate, but rather creates incentives for developers and home-builders to incorporate the principles of accessible design in single-family and smaller multi-family homes. Some additional work needs to be done to reconcile the language with existing code requirements for multi-family construction. But the bill is an important first step toward solving a large and ever-growing problem in this State. Our Office would be happy to work with the Committee and other advocacy groups to help tweak its provisions as it moves forward.

Thank you for considering these remarks. If there are any questions please feel free to contact me.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



March 4, 2009

To: Housing Committee

Re: Bill 5372

Hello Senator Gomes, Representative Green and the Housing Committee:

My name is Mary-Ann Langton, and I am a Disability Policy Specialist at the CT Council on Developmental Disabilities. The Council promotes HB 5372, AN ACT FOR ACCESSIBLE HOUSING. We encourage you to use the concept of Visitability housing that would meet everyone's needs.

There are three features that would make new single or two family homes construction be called Visitable. These three features are: 1) One zero step entrance, 2) Wider hallways and doorways and 3) One bath on the main floor with access space for a wheelchair.

Why should you support Visitability housing? People will need the features of Visitability housing as they begin to age. People will be able to age-in-place in their own homes by having these three features. In the 2007 Long Term Care Report, a large number of people reported that they wanted to age in their own homes. In addition, people with physical disabilities will be able visit their family and/or friends in their visitability housing.

The Council hopes that the Housing Committee will envision the importance of Visitability Housing.

Thank you,

Mary-Ann Langton

Mary-Ann Langton

Disability Policy Specialist

CT Council on Developmental Disabilities

460 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 418-6160
1-800-653-1134 (Connecticut only)
(860) 418-6172 (TTY) (860) 418-6003 (FAX)
web page: <http://www.state.ct.us/ctcdd>

Testimony Supporting Raised Bill No. 5372
Committee on Housing
March 4, 2010

Submitted by Gayle Kataja, RNC, MS
Member, North Central Disability Advocacy Network

Good afternoon. My name is Gayle Kataja. I am the Regional Director of the North Central Region of Connecticut Community Care, one of three Access Agencies contracted to administer the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders through the Department of Social Services. My office has also signed a memo of understanding with the North Central Area Agency on Aging and Independence Unlimited which outlined the formation the North Central Aging and Disability Resource Partnership. I am member of the North Central Disability Advocacy Network.

I am here today to support Raised Bill 5372, An Act Concerning Accessible Housing. Simply put, the bill makes sense, good common sense. I am here to address a term familiar to some and one that I hope will be universally recognized and accepted. The word is **visitability**. What that means to me and to my friends who use wheelchairs and to my friends and family who are aging is that if I invite you to my home, you can get into my house, you can maneuver the hallways and, if needed, you can use the bathroom. The NC Disability Advocacy Network has spent countless hours researching models around the country and the **visitability** concept and designs are taking hold. We are asking that builders in particular pay special attention to these three features which

would, from my perspective, increase the sale and resale value of homes. We are not asking you to mandate ramps; we are not asking for levered door handles, we are not asking for lowered counter tops. We are asking that every person have the ability to go to the home of anyone they wish. We are asking that new homes have a no step entrance, hallways just a few inches wider and bathroom that could be used by a person using a wheelchair. Life changing events are rarely planned. If you slipped on the ice or fell down the stairs and had to use a wheelchair would you be able to live in your home? You probably could if the **visitability** movement takes hold. Another group would also benefit. All of us here today are older than we were yesterday. Connecticut has more than 500,000 people over the age of 65 and it is estimated that over 40% of them will spend some time in a nursing home. Obviously, that means that carrying out "activities of daily living" could be hindered. Will you be able to live in your home in 5, 10, 20 years? Your chances would be better if **visitability** features were already in place. Thank you for your attention.

Testimony On Behalf of Raised Bill # 5372

March 4, 2010

By Susan Salters, Advocate and Community Inclusion Coordinator at Independence Unlimited and Faciliator of the NorthCentral Area Disability Advocacy Network

Good Afternoon, Chairman Green, members of the General Assembly Committee on Housing and distinguished guests. My name is Susan Salters. I am a resident of Coventry but I work as an advocate and community inclusion specialist at a Center for Independent Living here in Hartford called Independence Unlimited where we help people with disabilities to remain living independently in the community. I am here today to speak to you about Raised Bill No. 5372; An Act Concerning Accessible Housing, and why I am in favor of this legislation as a concrete step towards true community inclusion for people with disabilities into mainstream American life. First, I want to thank State Representative Kenneth Green for bringing this bill before this committee for your consideration and for suggesting creative incentives for private contractors to build homes with increased accessibility from now on. Rep. Green contacted me, as facilitator of the NorthCentral Area Disability Advocacy Network, a chapter of the regionwide Connecticut Disability Collaborative, when he became aware that NCADAN has been working diligently towards encouraging accessibility in housing. For the past couple of years, our group has been working on bringing the idea of Visitability to the people of Connecticut. Visitability is the vision that all newly constructed single family homes will be built with three simple design features that will tremendously increase accessibility. These features are; one zero step entrance, doorways with a full 32" clearance and wider hallways, as well as a bath on the main floor large enough for someone in a wheelchair to use the facility AND CLOSE THE DOOR. Visitability is a social movement that has spread nationwide and even overseas as people discover the advantages of designing and building homes with everyone in mind. The British Parliament enacted nationwide legislation back in 1998 mandating accessibility and before our own Congress is H.B. 1408 that also considers accessibility as necessary to the welfare of American citizens. Considering the aging Baby Boom population of the U.S. along with veterans returning from war with permanent injuries and the frail elderly isolated from their families in nursing facilities, making accessibility essential in residential construction JUST MAKES SENSE.

In my research on the subject of Visitability, opponents have declared that adding these three features to new homes is costly and that there isn't a market for these types of houses. But, I feel, there are many costs, both tangible and intangible, to NOT building with accessibility that needs to be weighed into this argument. Figured in should be the cost in time, money, materials and aggravation involved in remodeling a home after someone becomes disabled or elderly which, it is agreed, is greater than installing accessibility features to start with. There is also, the cost to our environment of adding

used building materials to our landfills when this dumping could have been avoided. Then there are the substantial federal healthcare costs of individuals taking up premature residence in nursing facilities due to structural barriers in their home. But more than material costs is the impact on our society and neighborhoods where stability, diversity and civic engagement are decreased proportionate to the numbers of individuals that leave or are left out of daily life. Inaccessible housing, also creates costly risks to individuals when First Responders answering emergency calls can't get equipment to the victim or out of the door. We know that the elderly are at greater risk of falling in their homes. Could it be because the doorway was too narrow for their walker, scooter or wheelchair to fit through so they opted for going it alone? Consider too the cost to quality of life and the increase in depression experienced by people isolated from others because of inaccessible home design.

But public policy should not be based solely on financial gain or polarized debate. It should be decided on by careful consideration of the overall benefit to the citizens of our state, all the citizens of our state not singularly the young, strong or able bodied. In your deliberations about this bill consider who, in your own family, may need safe passageway into their home or may need the use of assistive technology to get around. If not NOW, perhaps in the near future. Will that family member be able to join in Thanksgiving dinner or will there be an empty place setting because your house was not accessible?

Thank you for your time today and I hope you ponder this proposal carefully. Please feel free to ask me questions.

Susan Salters

Independence Unlimited

151 New Park Ave, Suite D

Hartford, CT 06106

(860) 523-5021



"Enhancing the effectiveness of disability activism by organizing and empowering individuals, families, groups and organizations"

Contact:

Stan Kosloski
7 Shadow Lane
Cromwell, CT 06416
stankosloski@att.net
860-614-8351

Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative

Testimony before the Housing Committee

1:00 pm

Thursday, March 4, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Stan Kosloski and I am the Executive Director of the CT Disability Advocacy Collaborative. For twenty five years I served as Assistant Director of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, where I had extensive experience with the State Building Code. I also served as State ADA Coordinator during the Weicker administration.

I am here today to provide my full support to HB 5372, and would like to first thank Rep. Green for his commitment to increasing housing opportunities for individuals with disabilities and elders. The proposal before you today is forward thinking and far reaching, and will provide benefits to thousands of individuals with mobility limitations for many years to come, those currently without disabilities now as well as those that do.

The intent of this bill is to encourage the development of single family and two-family homes that are "visitable" by individuals with mobility limitations. This is new territory for those of us in the advocacy world, but the objectives are simple. There are three items that we seek to encourage:

- One zero step entrance (could be at front, side or rear of house, or through garage)
- Doorways that are 32" clear and 42" hallways
- One bath on the main floor (could be a half bath) with sufficient room for a wheelchair

I would like to make one suggestion and raise one concern.

The term "accessible" is used in the proposal before you, and accessible homes, while welcomed, go beyond what we are seeking. In fact, encouraging accessible homes may prove harmful to the objective since accessible single family homes (e.g., fully accessible kitchens and bathrooms with grab bars, cut outs under sinks, lowered counters, etc.) are not likely to be in great demand, whereas visitable

homes, with the three adaptations I have mentioned that are often invisible, will prove more desirable.

There is a national standard – referred to as ICC/ANSI A117.1 – that is used by many states, including CT, as a basis for its Building Code. ICC/ANSI recently added a Type C dwelling unit to its housing section. Type C homes are visitable homes, and I brought copies of a summary of Type C guidelines for the committee to review. My recommendation would be to reference the ICC/ANSI Type C standard in the legislation you are considering.

The concern I have is this: multi-family units are included in the proposed legislation. Degrees of accessibility in multi-family units are already required under our Building Code. It does not seem necessary, and may prove counter-productive, to provide incentives for constructing housing that is already required to be accessible.

To wrap up: incorporating incentives for builders to construct visitable single and two family homes will enable elders to stay in their own home if they develop mobility limitations as they age; will increase the housing stock that has at least a minimum degree of accessibility; will allow individuals with mobility disabilities to visit the homes of family or friends, decreasing social isolation; and will enable those who become patients in nursing facilities or rehab hospitals to return home when they are able.

Thank you.

**DEPARTMENT OF SERVICES FOR PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES**

CITY OF NEW HAVEN

165 Church Street

New Haven, Connecticut 06510

Voice (203) 946-7833 • TTY (203) 946-8582 • Fax (203) 946-6934

Michelle M. Duprey Esq. • Director
Kristin Barber • Assistant Coordinator



Mayor John DeStefano, Jr.

March 4, 2010

Housing Committee
Room 011, Capitol Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Raised Bill #5372

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am writing today on behalf of the residents of New Haven support of Raised Bill #5372 that would give developers the option to make homes they construct visitable by individuals with mobility disabilities.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census 9,655 individuals over the age of 5 have a physical disability and reside in New Haven; 58,234 in New Haven county. This is a large portion of our population that likely has accessibility needs. While the number of individuals with physical disabilities in New Haven is less than 10% of our entire population there is not the same proportion of accessible housing. Most of Connecticut's single family and multifamily housing stock was built prior to any accessibility requirements and remains inaccessible for individuals with disabilities. Unfortunately, because the needs of persons with disabilities were ignored for so long, our current public policy, including the building code, must make up for decades of inaccessible construction.

For individuals with disabilities that my office has assisted in finding accessible housing, they frequently encounter a six month to over two year search for accessible housing. This is not an uncommon scenario around the state of Connecticut and other disability support organizations report similar waiting periods for accessible housing. We expect this will only get worse as more individuals acquire a disability as our population ages and injured veterans. This bill may improve these options for individuals needing minimal access.

In 1999, the City of New Haven conducted a comprehensive survey of our disability community. We asked survey participants if they felt the City of New Haven had enough accessible housing for people with disabilities and only 21.9% felt that we have enough accessible housing. 12.5% of the survey participants stated that they had difficulty finding accessible housing. Approximately 10% of survey participants report that their current housing has

Approximately 10% of survey participants report that their current housing has been modified to accommodate their disability and 74% stated that these modifications were made after moving in to their housing. Four percent of the funding for modifications came from state agencies, seven percent were paid for by general assistance and 19% of the modifications were paid by family members.

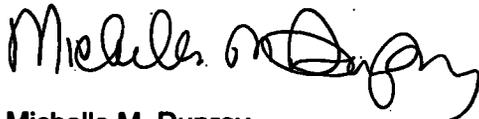
Based on the information above, when individuals with disabilities are forced to rent or buy inaccessible dwelling units and must modify them, many look to state funded programs for the modifications. Therefore, increasing the stock of accessible housing may actually save the state money if individuals are not forced to use state programs to modify inaccessible or adaptable housing units. Additionally, the state of Connecticut has a very active policy to move individuals from state funded beds in nursing home to a community setting with appropriate supports. Individuals moving out of nursing homes will more likely need accessible housing. The State's policy ultimately creates a greater demand for accessible housing and this bill helps meet that demand.

Visitable homes also have other benefits for the community. It allows individuals with disabilities to visit family and friends more readily. It creates a more integrated community. And one of the biggest benefits is it gives people with mobility disabilities in an emergency, when they must evacuate their homes, an option to stay with family or friends with a visitable home instead of an emergency shelter where there are little supports for their needs.

While the City of New Haven supports visitability efforts in this bill, I must emphasize that it is critical that tax revenue for the local communities should not be lost as a result of this initiative and associated incentives. Any plan that relies on payment in lieu of taxes must be funded 100% to insure no negative impact is felt by local communities and cannot be subject to change or diminution by future legislative acts or budgetary constraints.

Please feel free to contact me if I can provide any further assistance in this matter.

Very truly yours,



Michelle M. Duprey

**TESTIMONY ON RAISED BILL 5372: AN ACT
CONCERNING ACCESSIBLE HOUSING
MARCH 4, 2010**

Good Morning Representative Green, Housing Committee Members and other interested parties. My name is Candace Low, Executive Director of Independence Unlimited, a one stop disability resource center for people with disabilities. Thank you for coming to hear about this very important issue: Building accessible and visit-able housing to create inclusive communities. Along with my comments, I will be including comments from a fellow director of a sister center, Tony LaCava from Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County.

For many years disability advocates have sought to make communities friendlier to people with disabilities, people who are 60 and over and more inclusive in general to all people. Many homes are "off-limits" or inaccessible to a large segment of the population. Statistics show that nationwide, one in five people have some type of disability; at least 5% of the population use some kind of mobility aid; 3% of Americans live in homes with any kind of accessibility features although almost 30% of the families contain at least one member with a disability; and over one million households that have a person with a disability have unmet housing needs. The impact of basic barriers on people with mobility disabilities can include isolation, comprised health and safety and institutionalization. As we age, live longer, and veterans continue to come home with injuries, the need for more accessible and visit-able housing will increase to meet the needs of the aging and disability populations.

I am here today in support of Raised Bill 5372, An Act for Accessible Housing. I am also here to promote another solution to housing that people with mobility disabilities can use and that is the concept of visit-ability. Visit-ability is an affordable, sustainable and inclusive (Universal) design approach for integrating basic accessibility features into all newly built single and two family homes. Visit-ability incorporates three main features to make housing more welcoming: one no step entrance on an accessible path of travel, 32" clear opening at doorways and accessible circulation throughout the plan and basic access to one bathroom on the ground floor. Inclusive communities allow neighbors with all kinds of abilities to interact or visit each other and participate in community activities. The visit-ability

initiative is based on the conviction that social participation and the inclusion of basic architectural access features in new homes is a civil and basic human right and improves livability for all. Visit-ability and the use of universal design on a community level permits full access to social participation in community affairs and interaction with neighbors. Visit-ability is a very important step in making universal access to community life a reality for those who are currently consistently excluded.

Rep. Green's bill goes a long way to making more inclusive communities happen. The idea that homes may be open to neighbors, friends and family with disabilities means that persons with any mobility disability can live in their own home and invite persons with mobility issues to visit with a degree of naturalness. Rep. Green's bill will provide an opportunity for developers, builders, community leaders, family members and people who need accessible or visit-able homes to embrace full inclusion for everyone by supporting inclusive communities.

Connecticut has a wonderful program called Money Follows the Person where the state has committed a large amount of resources to transition people out of nursing homes into community based living. One huge barrier to this program is the lack of accessible and visit-able housing. How can we transition from institutions or help people remain in the community if there is no place to live? Rep. Green's bill will provide a decrease in state Medicaid spending as funds used for home modifications are not needed and can be allotted elsewhere. Rep. Green's bill also embraces the idea that going to a nursing home when you can no longer live in your own home due to access issues is not the only choice.

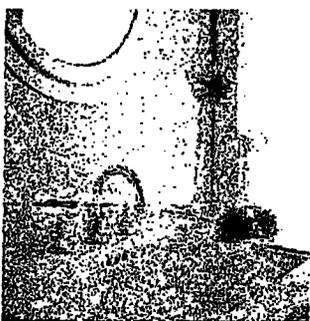
I want to thank Representative Green for his forward thinking in introducing bill 5372. Providing incentives for voluntary development of inclusive communities through building accessible or visit-able homes is the next step in helping people stay in their own homes where they can remain participating members of the community.

Thank you.

Candace Low, Executive Director
Independence Unlimited
151 New Park Ave, Ste D, Hartford, CT
clow@independenceunlimited.org

add to their own definition of Visitability advanced features such as a five-foot turning diameter in bathrooms, parking space requirements, a roll-in shower and so on, they are going beyond the scope of what is currently possible for rapid, broad application of Visitability, and the term Visitability should not be used for these initiatives.

The scope of the dwellings covered and the time in history of a Visitability initiative, whether voluntary or legislative, are also relevant to defining the flexible, evolving Visitability movement. For instance, a legislative effort that required some access in even a small percent of private, single-family houses pushed the borders far in an ordinance passed in Atlanta in 1992, whereas ordinances in Arizona in 2000 and Illinois in 2003 expanded the borders in a major new way by covering ALL new houses, not just those with some sort of public perk. Passing local ordinances is a major challenge, not to be minimized by advocates.



Over thirty-five localities country wide have adopted some form of a Visitability ordinance. Many are limited to state and federally funded housing, some are mandatory, some voluntary, and some have incentives built in.

On a smaller scale, any action as small as one person giving a Visitability handout to a builder, or advocating Visitability to a friend buying a new house, is a valuable part of the movement. The actions, large and small, of many thousands of participants are gradually reshaping how homes are built.

North Central Region Advocacy Network
 (sponsored and supported by Independence Unlimited)
 151 New Park Avenue
 Hartford, CT 06106
CANDACE LOW , EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SUE SALTERS, COMMUNITY INCLUSION COORDINATOR
 (860) 523-5021 voice/TTY
 (860) 523-7991 TTY (Auto answer)
 Contactus@independenceunlimited.org

Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative
 7 Shadow Lane
 Cromwell, CT 06416
STAN KOSLOSKI, PROJECT DIRECTOR
 860-614-8351 (CELL)
 skosloski03@comcast.net

Good Afternoon members of the Committee.

Thank you for allowing me to testify before you today on
Bill Number 5372: An Act Concerning Accessible Housing.

My name is Deborah Bassett and I am currently a Graduate student at the UCONN School of Social Work. I am here today advocating for housing that is accessible to people with disabilities.

There are three features that will make homes more accessible or visitable to everyone and these include: one zero step entrance, all interior doors providing at least 32 inches of unobstructed passage space, and at least a half bathroom on the main floor.

These features make homes easier for people who develop a mobility impairment to visit friends and extended family rather than having to turn down invitations, or not be invited at all. These features also provide a basic shell of access to permit formerly non-disabled people to remain in their homes if they develop a disability, rather than forcing them to do expensive renovations, relocate to a different house, live in an inaccessible home which endangers their health and safety, or move from the community into a nursing home.

In addition, these three features make fiscal sense for society as a whole. For instance, the average cost for one year of nursing home care exceeds \$50,000 per person, 62% of which is paid with public dollars. Sale and re-sale of these homes is enhanced in an era where the senior demographic is growing rapidly and baby boomers are attracted to homes that welcome their aging parents and provide easy-use homes for themselves. These features cost little up front, unlike the higher after-the-fact cost of renovation for widening doors and adding ramps.

I am fully in favor of incentives that will entice builders to put in more accessible features in 25 percent of the homes they build in the future as this will certainly help the lack of minimally accessible housing that exists today.

I am grateful to Representative Green for showing his support and for bringing this much needed proposal to the Housing Committee for their endorsement as a first step towards a future of full inclusion for all people.

Thank you very much for your time.



**Connecticut
Housing
Coalition**

Housing Committee
Public Hearing
March 4, 2010

Testimony of Jeffrey Freiser,
Executive Director, Connecticut Housing Coalition

Support

S.B. 317 - AAC BUILDINGS LOCATED WITHIN THE FIVE-HUNDRED-YEAR FLOODPLAIN.

S.B. 320 - AAC THE SELECTION OF TENANT COMMISSIONERS.

H.B. 5369 - AAC FORECLOSURE MEDIATION.

H.B. 5370 - AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS OF MODERATE RENTAL HOUSING OPERATED BY THE HARTFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY.

H.B. No. 5372 - AAC ACCESSIBLE HOUSING.

H.B. 5374 - AAC PROMOTING AND SUSTAINING AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN CONNECTICUT.

H.B. 5397 - AAC REAL ESTATE LICENSING FOR NONPROFIT HOUSING CORPORATIONS.

Conditional support – if amended:

S.B. 318 - AAC CHANGES TO CERTAIN HOUSING STATUTES.

Oppose:

H.B. 5371 - AAC A PILOT PROGRAM FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING REPLACEMENT.

H.B. 5373 - AAC ESTABLISHING RESIDENCY FOR TENANTS.

The Connecticut Housing Coalition represents the broad, vibrant network of community-based affordable housing activity across the state. Our more than 250 member organizations include nonprofit developers, human service agencies, resident associations, and diverse other housing practitioners and advocates. Founded in 1981, the Coalition works to expand housing opportunity and to increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing in Connecticut.

► **S.B. 320 – AAC The Selection of Tenant Commissioners**

Each housing authority in the state is governed by a board of commissioners, usually comprised of five members, although the largest housing authorities (with more than 3000 units) may have seven-member boards. C.G.S. Section 8-41 requires that one commissioner of a five-member board be a tenant of the housing authority, and that two commissioners of a seven-member board be tenants.

All across Connecticut, residents of public housing are actively involved in making their communities better places to live. They care deeply and work hard to improve the conditions of public housing. They want their children to live in an environment that is safe and decent. And they expect that a tenant who is serving on the housing authority's board of commissioners will truly provide a tenant's voice, offering the tenants' perspective in the deliberations of the local