

PA 14-35

HB5131

House	714-735	22
Senate	2447, 2449-2450	3
<u>Housing</u>	<u>5-8, 20</u>	<u>5</u>
		30

H - 1183

**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VOL.57
PART 3
685 - 1026**

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Will the House please come back to order?

Returning to the Calendar, will the Clerk please call Calendar Number 38.

THE CLERK:

Yes, Mr. Speaker.

On page 6 of today's Calendar, House Calendar 38, Favorable Report of the joint standing Committee on Housing, House Bill 5131, AN ACT TRANSFERRING CERTAIN POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler, the distinguished Chairman of the Housing Committee, you have the floor, sir.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move for acceptance of the joint committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The question is acceptance of the joint committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

Will you remark, sir?

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Yes. Just a moment. Just working on my decorum,
Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Mr. Speaker, this bill is -- is here to fix an oversight that we had when we transferred certain housal responsibilities from Department of DECD, in the last session, to Department of Housing. This is one of those areas that was an oversight, and this bill will actually transfer some of the powers and functions to the Department of Housing, the Commissioner of Department of Housing, more specifically.

Mr. Speaker, I also have an amendment. Well, hopefully the Clerk has an amendment, LCO Number 3123. I ask that --

THE CLERK:

Which one do you have?

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler, the amendment LCO Number is 3123; that's what I have.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

That's what I have.

mhr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

94
April 9, 2014

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The Chamber will stand at ease for a moment.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Okay.

(Chamber at ease.)

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

It appears that the -- will the Chamber come back to order -- it appears the Clerk does have the amendment in hand.

Mr. Clerk, will you please call LCO 3123, which will be designated House Amendment "A."

THE CLERK:

House Amendment "A," LCO 3123, offered by Representatives Butler, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Perone, Senator LeBeau, and Representative Berger, AN ACT TRANSFERRING CERTAIN POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Mr. Chairman, Representative Butler, I believe you were about to ask the Chamber for permission to

summarize. Is that correct?

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

That's correct.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The gentleman has asked leave of the Chamber to summarize the amendment. Is there objection? Is there objection?

Seeing none, you may proceed with summarization, sir.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This amendment is also in place to work with the underlying bill. While the underlying bill transfers the functions and responsibilities to the Commissioner of Housing, there's still some responsibilities that the Commissioner of DECD needs to perform these duties and to actually designate people that can also take care of these functions and serve in her replacement.

I move adoption.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

The question before the Chamber is adoption of House Amendment "A."

Do you care to remark?

Representative Perone, of the 137th.

REP. PERONE (137th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Through you, the Commerce Committee essentially sees this as a really just nothing more than a technical change and a necessary change to -- to make this, make the underlying bill that much more effective. So we support its passage. It is not new responsibility or any -- any expansion of current -- current authority.

Thank you.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

Do you care to remark further on the amendment?

Representative Bacchiochi, of the 52nd.

REP. BACCHIOCHI (52nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, through you, a question to the proponent of the amendment?

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Please proceed, madam.

REP. BACCHIOCHI (52nd):

Thank you.

Lines 126 through 129 state that the Commissioner

mhr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

97
April 9, 2014

may designate any Deputy Commissioner or employee of a department to exercise the authority of the Commissioner. Through you, Mr. Speaker, would that mean any person that is employed by the State of Connecticut could receive that authority from -- from the Commissioner?

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

I guess one could read that here. I would say it is probably designee from the Department of Economic Community Development.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Bacchiochi.

REP. BACCHIOCHI (52nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just to clarify, though, what I'm specifically asking is would the Commissioner of the Economic and Community Development be able to designate responsibilities to any employee of that agency?

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

I would say yes.

mhr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

98
April 9, 2014

REP. BACCHIOCHI (52nd):

Okay. I would --

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Bacchiochi.

REP. BACCHIOCHI (52nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe this was, a public hearing was held in Commerce, so I'm not really familiar with the details specifically, but it seems slightly unusual that the Commissioner could designate his or her full responsibilities to any person that works in that agency.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, is this done in any other state agency?

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, this is, you know, pretty much through the Deputy Commissioner that this would take place. And I'm sure that they would probably have familiarity with all the functions that are provided within the scope of the amendment.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

mhr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

99
April 9, 2014

Representative Bacchiochi.

REP. BACCHIOCHI (52nd):

Thank you for that answer.

But Mr. Speaker, through you, it says that the -- the designation may be made to any Deputy Commissioner or employee. So I'll continue to listen to the debate; that seems somewhat unusual.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, madam.

Would you care to remark further on the amendment before us, on House Amendment "A?"

Representative Alberts.

REP. ALBERTS (50th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If I may, a question to the proponent of the amendment?

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Please proceed, sir.

REP. ALBERTS (50th):

Thank you.

And I'm -- I'm following up on the conversation that the previous speaker had, and I guess I have some of the same concern in terms of lines 127 through 128,

mhr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

100
April 9, 2014

the phrasing "employee of the department." And am I to understand that as an administrative assistant of the Commissioner could be designated to have that authority of the Commissioner?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, this is existing statutory language, so it's no different than what currently exists.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alberts.

REP. ALBERTS (50th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So I guess I'm -- I'm confused then. I mean, this is, as I understand it, that this is new language that we're putting in place. Are we allowing any employee of DECD at the direction of the Commissioner to have the authority of the Commissioner, and to include administrative staff as well?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

mhr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

101
April 9, 2014

Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, we're taking this and -- and where it was placed in statute before, we're putting it in statute that is relevant to DECD; that's the difference.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alberts.

REP. ALBERTS (50th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So I understand we now have an opportunity to clean up this language, to straighten it out so that we don't give the latitude that we now have in place. So perhaps what we should be doing is making a change to this language and eliminating the phrasing in the end of line 127, "or employee of the department." Because if -- if all we're doing is codifying existing language, let's make this better.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Well, the -- the intent is really to have the Deputy Commissioner, but there could be a situation where a Deputy Commissioner may not be in place and there's some designee to perform those duties. And I think that's what the language pretty much speaks to.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alberts.

REP. ALBERTS (50th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I do appreciate that having the Deputy Commissioners having that latitude, I agree wholeheartedly. I guess my concern is that we're making this so broad that just about any, well actually anyone if you follow these words would be eligible for this. And I'm not sure that that's the intent that we want to have. And is there other phrasing that we may be able to proceed with?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, not at this time.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alberts.

REP. ALBERTS (50th):

Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I do thank the proponent for his remarks. I -- I do remain concerned. I'll listen to the testimony but I -- I may be voting against the amendment.

Thank you.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

Do you care to remark further on the amendment?

Representative Carter, from the 2nd District.

REP. CARTER (2nd):

Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

Through you, one question to the proponent of the amendment?

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Please proceed, sir.

REP. CARTER (2nd):

It was mentioned just a moment ago that this already exists in current statute, and that was confusing to me because I thought this is what we were doing with this amendment. So I guess my question is: Currently, right now, does the Commissioner have the

ability to delegate his authority to anybody in the department that he wants to or she wants to?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Carter.

REP. CARTER (2nd):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, is it possible to -- to direct me to somewhere in Connecticut Statute that shows that a Commissioner can delegate all their authority to an employee?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler.

REP. CARTER (2nd):

Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Not that I'm aware of.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Carter.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Through you.

REP. CARTER (2nd):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, maybe I should rephrase. It's been said that the power already exists for the Commissioner to give their authority to an employee. If that's the case, sir, then for you, why are we doing this in the first place?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, because we want to make sure that this language is spelled out in statutes that are relevant to DECD and the underlying bill, actually in statute that is relevant to Department of Housing.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Carter.

REP. CARTER (2nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously I'll pay attention to the rest of the debate. But, you know, I am really concerned because I know nowhere in Connecticut Statute where it

mhr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

106
April 9, 2014

currently allows a Commissioner just to delegate all their authority and where it's spelled out this way. But I'll try to, try to do a search for that information and -- and I'll listen to the debate as it progresses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

Would you care to remark further on the amendment before us?

Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to try, I guess, and stay on that same topic. So if I could, through you, just a couple of questions of the proponent of the amendment, please.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Please proceed, sir.

REP. MINER (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So again referring to lines 127, 128, and 129, is there any other language within this same statute that might help us understand the limitations that the Commissioner might have and any other person that

mhr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

107
April 9, 2014

might be appointed to carry out the statutory and regulatory responsibilities as contemplated in this bill?

Through you.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, this is pretty much what's spelled out. I -- I don't think there's anything else that's going to bring any more clarity to what you're looking for, Representative.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And if I get the gist of what people are concerned about, what I think they seem to be concerned about is that if I were the Commissioner and you were not the Deputy Commissioner but someone else in the employ of this agency, I could confer to you the responsibilities, both statutory and regulatory responsibilities, even if you were, let's say, a clerk

mhr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

108
April 9, 2014

in an office. So that's why I think people are looking for some comfort in the breadth of this language.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

I just, for legislative intent, the -- this is -- really the intent of this is for to have the Deputy Commissioner or some administrative-level person that would handle these responsibilities, you know, just not the new employee who just walked in, day one, down the hall; you know.

So through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I, and I understand the legislative intent, but I don't think legislative intent overrules the plain reading of the language. And the plain reading of the language is "or employee of the department."

So I'm -- I'm kind of remembering a point in time

when a Commissioner of the State of Connecticut, maybe even through his driver, was somehow administering a program. And I think that's the concern that people are expressing is that unless it's written in the statute somewhere to specifically restrict the kind of freedom that someone might have to confer that authority on someone that's not worthy of that authority, wouldn't voting for this language kind of put us at risk with that possibility?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER (72nd):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, this is the language that has been used for, you know, forever, and we haven't had a problem. So I don't foresee a problem going forward, Mr. Speaker.

Through you.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm -- I'm recalling that circumstance and I think there was a problem, as a matter of fact; I

think there was a serious problem that people had alleged that somehow someone was taking it upon themselves to either confer or accept some administrative authority that maybe it wasn't intended for them to ever have.

So, you know, I -- I can understand the reason why we would want to allow a Commissioner to designate a Deputy Commissioner, and I'm imagining that maybe buried within the statute somewhere there's some language that would allow the Commissioner to confer, let's -- let's say the authority to take back something that they may have permitted, either in a grant if we found wrongdoing, but that's not clear here. And because of the way it's drafted, I think it just leads people to believe that there are a lot of other opportunities that, I guess to go back to Representative Alberts, you know, maybe we would want to look at this a little differently this time and see if it needs to be cleaned up.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I do thank the gentleman for his responses.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

Would you care to remark further on the

mhr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

111
April 9, 2014

amendment? Would you care to remark further on the amendment before us?

If not, let me try your minds. All those in favor of House Amendment "A," please signify by saying Aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Those opposed, Nay.

The Ayes have it. The amendment is adopted.

Would you care to remark further on the bill as amended? Would you care to remark further on the bill as amended?

If not, staff and guests to the Well of the House. Members take your seats.

And before the machine is open, I just want to alert the members that we had a malfunction with the elevator which prevented Representative Molgano to access his seat and therefore vote from his seat. He will be, he is now seated in the, in the Well of the House.

After the vote is taken and the machine is closed, I will ask Representative Molgano for his vote and how he wishes it to be cast. That's a technical

thing that we have to do because of the way the voting machine actually works. So we will close the vote. When we're done, I'll ask Representative Molgano for his vote.

The Clerk will register his vote, and then we'll get a final tally, just so everyone understands. We'll do that for as long as the malfunction in the elevator occurs this afternoon.

And with that, the machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll.

The House of Representatives is voting by roll. Will members please return to the Chamber immediately.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted?

Members please check the board to make sure your vote is properly cast.

If all the members have voted, the machine will be locked.

Representative Molgano, how do you wish to cast your vote?

REP. MOLGANO (144th):

Negative.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Molgano wishes to cast his vote in the negative.

And will the Clerk please take a tally.

Will the Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Bill Number 5131, LCO 3123, as amended by House

"A."

Total number voting	144
Necessary for passage	73
Those voting Yea	120
Those voting Nay	24
Absent and not voting	5

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The bill as amended passes.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar Number 182.

THE CLERK:

Mr. Speaker, Calendar 182, Favorable Report of the joint standing Committee on Human Services, Substitute House Bill 5441, AN ACT CONCERNING DIRECT PAYMENT OF RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Hilda Santiago; you have the floor, madam.

**S - 676
CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VOL. 57
PART 8
2311 – 2667**

Those absent and not voting 3

THE CHAIR:

The bill passes.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, before calling for a vote on the second Consent Calendar -- have several additional items to add to that Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, Madam President.

The first is calendar page 6, Calendar 328, House Bill 5125, move to place that item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

The second item is calendar page 8, Calendar 337, House Bill Number 5131, move to place that item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, sir, so ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

lgg/rd/cd
SENATE

287
May 2, 2014

Page 43, Calendar 387, Senate Bill 432.

Page 43, Calendar 399, Senate Bill 152. Also on
page 43, Calendar 405, Senate bill 457.

On page 6, Calendar 328, House Bill 5125.

And on page 8, Calendar 337, House Bill 5131.

On page 19, Calendar 460, House Bill 5057; and on
page 20, Calendar 462, House Bill 5472; and on
page 25, Calendar 501, House Bill 5578.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, please call for a roll call vote on
the Consent Calendar. And the machine is open.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the
Senate. Immediate roll call on the Consent
Calendar Number 2 has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

Have all members voted? All members voted. The
machine will be closed.

Mr. Clerk, will you please call the tally.

THE CLERK:

On today's second Consent Calendar.

Total Number Voting	34
Necessary for Adoption	18
Those voting Yea	34
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	2

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar passes.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, would request suspension for purposes of immediate transmittal to the House of calendar page 37, Calendar 198, Senate Bill 357.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, yield the floor to members for announcements or points of personal privilege or upcoming committee meetings.

THE CHAIR:

Are there any points of personal privilege or upcoming meetings?

Senator Linares.

SENATOR LINARES:

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Good morning, sir.

SENATOR LINARES:

Good morning. Happy Saturday to you.

THE CHAIR:

I don't know about that sir, but go ahead.

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

HOUSING

1 – 358

**2014
INDEX**

1
la/gdm/gbr HOUSING COMMITTEE

February 20, 2014
1:00 P.M.

CHAIRMEN: Senator Bartolomeo
Representative Butler

MEMBERS PRESENT:

SENATORS: Doyle, McKinney

REPRESENTATIVES: Arce, Bacchiochi, Diminico,
Kupchick, Miller, Rose,
Wright

REP. BUTLER: Good afternoon. We're going to now convene the public hearing of the Housing Committee this Thursday, February 20th, 2014. I'd just like to mention to all the members this is being recorded by CTN, so please speak into the microphones when you're talking. And, also, for our guests that are here, please speak into the microphone when you're addressing the committee so we could capture all those important testimony guidelines that we need to consider. Okay.

And before we start, any comments here?

BART DANTE: Just that we may ask you, as a question for the record, if you quote a study or numbers or percentages or something that we want to have further substantiated. So, if we ask you a question for the record, to get more information, we would have you then get it to Brandon McCall, our clerk, and to be able to consider your testimony. Thank you.

REP. BUTLER: Thank you. Well, first we have the Commissioner of Housing, Commissioner Evonne Klein, to please come forward. Thank you for coming today.

COMMISSIONER KLEIN: Thank you. Good afternoon,
Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Butler and

HB 5131

members of the Housing Committee. My name is Evonne Klein and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Housing.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you regarding House Bill 5131, An Act Transferring Certain Powers and Functions of the Department of Economic and Community Development to the Department of Housing. This proposal is part of the Department of Housing's legislative package this session.

The Department of Housing fully supports the transfer of the Department of Economic and Community Development's powers authorized under Sections 8-37x and 8-13x of the Connecticut General Statutes to DOH as the new lead agency on all matters concerning housing.

Section 8-37x was a DOH statute until the Department was merged into DECD along with this housing statute in 1995. Now that another Department of Housing is formed, this statute should be transferred back to DOH. Among other things, this statute authorizes the Commissioner of DECD to conduct studies and surveys regarding state housing conditions and projects, acquire title to certain housing properties and to defer payments under troubled loan agreements. Section 8-13x enables DECD to award grants to nonprofit housing organizations under the Incentive Housing Zone program. The other authorizing statutes for this program, which DOH administers, were already transferred to DOH last session.

The Interagency Council on Affordable Housing, which was established through legislation in 2012 to develop strategies and recommendations for the formation of DOH, originally recommended Sections 8-37x and 8-13x for transfer to DOH. However, these housing

3
la/gdm/gbr HOUSING COMMITTEE

February 20, 2014
1:00 P.M.

statutes were mistakenly omitted when compiling the final implementer bill. This legislation will simply complete their transfer to DOH.

I respectfully request the Committee's support for the transfers as specified in House Bill 5131. Thank you.

REP. BUTLER: Thank you. Are there any questions? I have a couple. How are you currently handling some of those areas where it's spelled out that DECD has -- there's a reference to DECD where you have to handle any current business?

Currently, are there any areas that are -- still have language to DECD that you have to --

COMMISSIONER KLEIN: Other than this, no. So --

REP. BUTLER: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER KLEIN: -- it would just, you know, again make the transition smoother. Any -- anything that -- I think we're fortunate to be in the same building. Anything that gets delivered to DECD that should be Housing certainly comes down to us. So, again, just making this all right within this Connecticut General Statutes would make our jobs certainly a lot easier.

REP. BUTLER: Okay. Great. Well, I could tell you they're working on the implementer. I could tell you that the amount of statutes, all the numbers and all the letters, it's amazing that we didn't miss more. So, we're sorry for that oversight but, hopefully, we'll take care of it now. Senator Doyle?

SENATOR DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a quick question. How is the overall -- a

general question how the -- how is the overall transition and consolidation in the Department going?

COMMISSIONER KLEIN: I have to say that the Department -- the consolidation went very well. And to Representative Butler's point, everything that needed to come over and be transferred, the couple of things that fell through the cracks, if you will, these two statutes, and you know, we transferred a number of programs from the Department of Social Services:

The number of contracts, I'm proud to say that our contractors were basically paid on time. We had a couple of issues but we were quickly able to remedy that. There was a great deal of work to happen behind the scenes and getting the IT portion up and running very quickly.

The staff certainly -- they were all on board as of the end of June and we were ready to go on July 1st. So, the staff certainly has made a great adjustment and it's been a wonderful opportunity to look at all of our programs and -- and really raise the issues of what we can be doing better and where and taking that on. So, the transition -- thank you for asking -- has gone very well, and we certainly appreciate your support.

SENATOR DOYLE: Well, it sounds good and remarkable. Thank you.

REP. BUTLER: Are there any more questions? Okay. All right. Well, thank you, Commissioner Klein.

Is there anyone else who would like to come and speak on any of the bills? Anyone else? Well, we're going to -- we're going to recess for



Evonne M. Klein
Commissioner

Department of Housing

Connecticut
still revolutionary

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSING COMMITTEE 2/20/2014

Evonne Klein, Commissioner
Department of Housing

Support for House Bill No. 5131

**AN ACT TRANSFERRING CERTAIN POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING**

Good afternoon Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Butler and members of the committee. My name is Evonne Klein and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Housing (DOH). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you regarding House Bill 5131 – An Act Transferring Certain Powers and Functions of the Department of Economic and Community Development to the Department of Housing. This proposal is part of DOH's legislative package this session.

The Department of Housing (DOH) fully supports the transfer of the Department of Economic and Community Development's (DECD) powers authorized under Sections 8-37x and 8-13x of the Connecticut General Statutes to DOH, as the new lead agency on all matters concerning housing. Section 8-37x was a DOH statute until the Department was merged into DECD along with this housing statute in 1995. Now that another Department of Housing is formed, this statute should be transferred back to DOH. Among other things, this statute authorizes the Commissioner of DECD to conduct studies and surveys regarding state housing conditions and projects, acquire title to certain housing properties, and to defer payments under troubled loan agreements. Section 8-13x enables DECD to award grants to nonprofit housing organizations under the Incentive Housing Zone program. The other authorizing statutes for this program, which DOH administers, were already transferred to DOH last session.

The Interagency Council on Affordable Housing, which was established through legislation in 2012 to develop strategies and recommendations for the formation of DOH, originally recommended Sections 8-37x and 8-13x for transfer to DOH. However, these housing statutes were mistakenly omitted when compiling the final implementer bill. This legislation will simply complete their transfer to DOH.

I respectfully request the Committee's support for the transfers as specified in HB 5131. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

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