



Legislative Testimony
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Sample Testimony Supporting House Bill 5242, An Act Concerning the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record on Housing Opportunities

Good afternoon, Senator Moore, Representative Felipe, Ranking Members Senator Sampson and Representative Scott, and all the members of the Housing Committee.

My name is William Roberts, I am a resident of Hartford, a Residential Operations Supervisor at the Friendship Service Center in New Britain, and a Smart Justice Leader with the ACLU of Connecticut. I am here to testify in support of HB 5242: An Act Concerning the Collateral Consequences of Criminal Records on Housing Opportunities.

First off, I would like to say that housing is not just a basic need, but a human right. We believe that once a person has finished their sentence, they should be afforded the same basic rights as other members of society. Not just access to jobs and education, but most importantly housing. As of right now the list of requirements just to get access to housing has increased over the years with very little oversight on the impact it is causing. From extreme rent increases forcing out low wage hard working people, to people forking over hundreds of dollars a month in credit background checks and criminal histories. In some of these cases charges that show no disposition, even if those charges are dismissed.

A couple of weeks ago a resident where I work was filled with anxiety after a charge popped on their credit report. Even though this person's charge was dropped after two weeks, they had to explain to the potential landlord why it was even there.

Other residents where I work are also facing an uphill battle due to prior criminal records. From getting jobs, to not being able to afford rent prices after they do find one, to getting discriminated against because of a criminal history even after finding an apartment they can actually afford.

Although I have an apartment, have paid my rent faithfully for the last 5 years, no evictions, I know especially in this housing crisis of high rents, increase in no-cause evictions, I can easily be displaced from a community I have called home for over 13 years.

I urge the members of the Housing Committee to support HB 5242 and put people over business interests, but most of all because housing is a human right.