

**Connecticut Sentencing Commission
Public Hearing on 2013 Legislative Proposals
November 29, 2012**

Certificates of Rehabilitation Proposal

Testimony of Scott C. Bertrand

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Sentencing Committee,

My name is Scott C. Bertrand and I am the Executive Director of the Enfield Housing Authority. I have been a public housing practitioner for over 17 years. I am also a member of the Executive Board and Past President of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials more commonly known as CONN-NAHRO.

I strongly oppose the Commission's proposal for Certificates of Rehabilitation Program as currently proposed for the following reasons:

The public housing piece of this proposal is not needed. Housing authorities already have processes in place that allow an opportunity for ex-offenders to present evidence of rehabilitation for the PHA's consideration. This fact was emphasized last year when a similar proposal was made.

The proposal unfairly shifts the burden from the offender to the public housing authority by creating a presumption of rehabilitation. The existing residents will bear the legal expenses of refuting the certificate.

Local public housing authorities have a clear responsibility to the existing residents to provide a safe living environment. It is my understanding that the proposal seeks to reduce recidivism but recognizes it will not be eliminated. Even if the high re-arrest rate of 79% is cut in half, we can expect about 2 out of every 5 to re-offend within five years. This will most likely negatively impact the safety, well-being, and right to peaceful enjoyment of our elderly, disabled and moderate income families.

The proposal offers no liability protection for housing authorities. The synopsis of the proposal released by the sentencing commission states that there will be liability protection for employers. However, there is no such protection for public housing authorities being proposed.

The program singles out public housing authorities. It does not include the other thousands of affordable and market rate housing. It is unfair to place the responsibility for housing ex-convicts on an already financially stressed segment of the housing market.

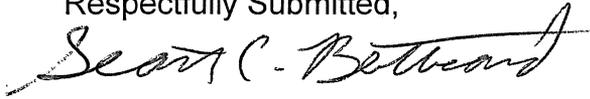
The increase costs will be borne by the existing residents. There are thousands of housing authority apartments in Connecticut that receive no ongoing operational

subsidy. The expenses for their operation are mostly covered by the rents paid by the residents. The cost of increased legal expenses for increased lease enforcement and to refute certificates of rehabilitation will result in rent increases to the existing low income residents.

I believe the residents and practitioners of public housing will not support this proposal. This is based on the strong opposition to the similar proposal last year. There also does not appear to be public support for this proposal. I have read many of the comments made on-line to the recent Associated Press article and did not find any in support of the housing proposal.

I encourage the Sentencing Commission to remove public housing from the Certificate of Rehabilitation Program Proposal.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Scott C. Bertrand". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Scott C. Bertrand