



**TESTIMONY OF  
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE  
HOUSING COMMITTEE  
Thursday, February 2, 2023**

**SB 909, An Act Establishing A Right To Housing  
HB 6555, An Act Establishing A Commission On Homelessness**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 909, An Act Establishing A Right To Housing and HB 6555, An Act Establishing A Commission On Homelessness.**

Connecticut hospitals continue to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and are now facing new challenges of treating sicker patients than they saw before the pandemic, with a dedicated but smaller workforce who are exemplary but exhausted. They are also experiencing significant financial hardships brought on by record inflation. Through it all, hospitals have been steadfast, providing high-quality care for everyone who walks through their doors, regardless of ability to pay.

Housing costs and lack of quality affordable housing may compel people to live in situations that are rife with health and safety risks. These types of conditions can exacerbate physical conditions and contribute to mental health conditions. Housing stability, quality, safety, and affordability all impact health outcomes including risk for chronic diseases such as asthma and mental health conditions such as depression. Working with community organizations and government partners, hospitals and health systems have an important role in connecting patients to housing.

However, housing programs at the local and state level as well as community-based organizations serving the unstably housed and homeless need substantial investments of additional resources to make a meaningful impact on reducing the percentage of the population experiencing homelessness and housing instability. When people experience homelessness they struggle to get proper nutrition, preventive medical care, and to manage chronic health conditions. High housing costs and low housing supply increase the threats of eviction and can create difficult choices between paying rent and paying for medicine, food, utilities, and other essentials. Hospitals see the difference that affordable, quality, stable housing can make in health outcomes.

CHA supports HB 6555, an Act Establishing A Commission On Homelessness, and supports the right to housing identified in SB 909, and notes that necessary and substantial investments in housing stock, quality, affordability, and availability of rental assistance must be made by the state in order to fully support a person's right to housing.

SB 909 proposes to establish a right to housing that would include the right to protection from housing loss, the right to safe and affordable housing, the right to shelter for individuals who lose housing and individuals defined as special populations. Additionally, SB 909 proposes the establishment of a Right to Housing Committee.

HB 6555 would establish a Commission on Homelessness within the Legislative Branch to review existing and proposed housing policies and advise the General Assembly on strategies to prevent and reduce homelessness, the coordination of services and provision of supports and emergency shelter for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and the availability and accessibility of affordable housing in the state.

Hospitals frequently encounter challenges associated with housing in the care of their patients, especially as a factor in inpatient and emergency department aftercare planning. Many are also actively engaged in housing-related solutions with local housing authorities and cross-sector community partners.

**CHA requests hospital representation on the Right to Housing Committee proposed in SB 909 and the Commission on Homelessness proposed in HB 6555.**

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.