



TESTIMONY OF KATHLEEN FLAHERTY, ESQ.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CT LEGAL RIGHTS PROJECT, INC.
AGING COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
FEBRUARY 23, 2021

In opposition to: SB 899 (specifically section 1), AN ACT CONCERNING SENIOR SAFETY ZONES.

In support of: SB 900, AN ACT INCREASING FUNDING FOR AGING IN PLACE INITIATIVES.

Senator Slap, Representative Phipps, Senator Kelly, Representative Wilson and distinguished members of the Aging Committee:

1

Good afternoon. My name is Kathy Flaherty and I am the Executive Director of Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP), a statewide non-profit agency that provides legal services to low income adults with serious mental health conditions. CLRP was established in 1990 pursuant to a Consent Order that mandated that the state provide funding for CLRP to protect the civil rights of DMHAS clients who are hospitalized, as well as those clients who are living in the community.

CLRP opposes SB 899 because it is unnecessary. The stated purpose of the bill is “To add senior centers and other facilities serving or housing senior citizens to those notified of sex offenders in their neighborhoods and provide education to senior citizens on how to protect themselves from the threat of sex offenders.” Current law already permits the disclosure to senior centers: “Any state agency, the Judicial Department, any state police troop or any local police department may, at its discretion, notify any government agency, private organization or individual.” There is no need to amend the law to specifically include senior centers and other facilities that serve or house senior citizens. Six years ago there was a legislative

task force created to look at these issues. Their final report (available at <https://ctcwcs.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/senior-safety-zone-final-report.pdf>) did not include mandatory notification as outlined in this bill. CLRP does not object to the development of community education materials, with the caveat that such materials should be based in facts and data and not used to perpetuate bias and fear.

CLRP supports the increase in funding for aging in place initiatives as outlined in **SB 900**. People should have the opportunity to age in place and continue to live in the community with voluntary supports and services; the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that congregate care facilities cannot be the only option, because they present their own safety risk. I know that the purview of this committee is issues related to senior citizens, but I would be remiss if I failed to remind you that every person who enters a nursing home is also a person with at least one (and often more than one) disability. Disabled people must also have the opportunity to live full lives in our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony as you continue your important work.