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Public Health Committee
Monday, March 29th, 2021

Written Testimony in Support of
H.B. 6666 An Act Concerning The Department Of Public Health's Recommendations
Regarding Various Revisions To The Public Health Statutes

Dear Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for considering my testimony in support of Sec. 70 Section 7-36 of H.B. 6666 An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions To The Public Health Statutes. My name is Omena McCoy, and I am the Senior Policy Analyst for the CT Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH).

I submit this testimony on behalf of an organization that represents over 100 member agencies across the State of Connecticut, who are tirelessly working to end homelessness.

At CCEH, we along with our partners understand that safe, stable housing and access to effective services and programs helps to prevent and end youth homelessness. Stable housing helps to improve economic and health outcomes for young residents at risk of, or that currently are, experiencing homelessness. The revisions in Sec. 70 Section 7-36 will allow youth ages 15-24 who are experiencing homelessness, as verified by their school or a provider, to obtain a copy of their birth certificate and state ID free of charge. The revision also specifies a definition of homelessness consistent with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

As currently written, state law allows for a fee waiver for individuals who are residents of a homeless shelter or other facility for homeless persons. However, there are countless youth experiencing homelessness today that do not utilize shelter. Through our organization's Youth & Outreach Count conducted last year, we identified that 7.823 youth had been either unstably housed or literally homeless. In my experience, these young women and men are not utilizing shelter but rather couch surf in the homes of friends and/or intimate partners.

Accessing a state ID card is critical for youth experiencing homelessness. Without an ID, youth have difficulty obtaining employment, enrolling in training programs (e.g. Job Corps), qualifying for housing and accessing health benefits. Of the youth surveyed in our Youth & Outreach Count, 5.25 percent indicated that having an identification card was a necessity, with 12.1 percent indicating that employment was vital to their survival. Having access to these vital documents helps our youth establish greater agency and provides them with access to services that they need to make it out of a life of homelessness.

We at CCEH hope that members of this committee will support H.B. 6666, to ensure that our youth have greater access to these necessary documents. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your continued support in ensuring instances of youth homelessness in CT is rare, brief, and non-reoccurring.

Sincerely,

Omena McCoy, CCEH Senior Policy Analyst