
Murphy and Housing Advocates Announce Federal Legislation to Provide More Supportive Housing for People with Disabilities

Tuesday, 07 April 2009

Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) came to Chamberlain Heights in Meriden to announce that he has proposed legislation to provide thousands of new affordable housing units for low income, disabled individuals across the country.

April 8, 2009

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MERIDEN, CT - Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) came to Chamberlain Heights in Meriden to announce that he has proposed legislation to provide thousands of new affordable housing units for low income, disabled individuals across the country.

Murphy has heard from affordable housing experts and mental health professionals in Connecticut about the need for more affordable housing options for people with disabilities that also provide optional services to assist with skills required for independent living.

"After hearing from housing experts and advocates in Connecticut about the challenges they face in housing those in need, it's clear that we are behind in providing options for those with disabilities. My bill will provide a true path to ensuring thousands of extremely low income, disabled Americans find safe, permanent housing," said Murphy.

Working closely with those same experts, Murphy has introduced legislation with Republican Congresswoman Judy Biggert (IL-13), the "Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act of 2009", to update a national housing statute often referred to as "section 811", which is the only federal housing program dedicated to helping extremely low income citizens with serious disabilities live independently in a community environment with a support system. Section 811 needs to be updated because the current program is not meeting the increasing demand for supportive housing units.

Murphy's legislation will make several important changes to the 811 program:

- To speed up the process, it allows states greater involvement in the approval of projects;
- Provides incentives for federal supportive housing money to be partnered with state and private money in order to spread federal dollars out to build more supportive housing units;
- Shifts federal funding away from individual vouchers to construction of new supportive housing units, resulting in a

potential tripling of annual supportive housing units built with federal support.

"Many people with a mental illness who have a stable home environment through supportive housing will sooner be able to enter recovery, eventually getting jobs in their community. Providing supportive housing is not only the moral thing to do for one of the most vulnerable segments of our society, it is also the fiscally responsible thing to do for taxpayers," said Thomas Burr, President of National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Manchester.

Murphy's legislation, H.R. 1675, is named after the late Frank Melville, the first chair of the Melville Charitable Trust which has been a leading source of funding for supportive housing for more than fifteen years. Murphy's bill passed the House of Representatives last year, but needed to be reintroduced to be considered this year.

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