

Congress Sends Murphy's Bipartisan Bill to Provide More Housing for People with Disabilities to President Obama to Sign into Law

After quick approval in the U.S. Senate on Friday, ushered through by Connecticut Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT), today the U.S. House of Representatives passed and sent to President Obama to sign Congressman Chris Murphy's (CT-5) legislation to provide thousands of new affordable housing units for low income, disabled individuals across the country.

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - After quick approval in the U.S. Senate on Friday, ushered through by Connecticut Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT), today the U.S. House of Representatives passed and sent to President Obama to sign Congressman Chris Murphy's (CT-5) legislation to provide thousands of new affordable housing units for low income, disabled individuals across the country.

"Too many extremely low income people with disabilities in Connecticut go without one of their most basic needs - a home. I'm thrilled that this bill will become law because it will give us the tools to make an extraordinary difference in the lives of those in need. This victory wouldn't have been possible without Chris Dodd's help, and I'm so grateful for his work in the Senate to get this done before the clock wound down on this Congress," said Murphy.

"Low income people with disabilities face tremendous challenges finding affordable housing," said Dodd. "Well over a million low income people with disabilities spend more than half of their incomes on housing, and many thousands more live in more restrictive, institutional settings than they would choose, just because they don't have other housing alternatives. I congratulate Congressman Murphy on this bill, which will help lift this burden and also honor the transformational work of Frank Melville."

Murphy and Dodd have heard from affordable housing experts and mental health professionals in Connecticut about the need for more affordable housing that offers services to support independent living for people with disabilities.

Working closely with those same experts, Murphy 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. Chairman Dodd's Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, held a subcommittee hearing on the bill in September 2009, and he secured committee approval in late September, leading to Senate passage on Friday.

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:

- Allocates funding to triple the number of supportive housing units built with federal dollars;
- Speeds up the process by allowing 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;

The bill is named after the late Frank Melville, a longtime resident of northwest Connecticut and the first chair of the Melville Charitable Trust, which has been a leading source of funding for supportive housing for more than fifteen years.

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