

Murphy's Supportive Housing Legislation Moving Forward; Connecticut Housing Expert testifies in Washington on Murphy's Bill

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, the House Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity held a hearing on Congressman Chris Murphy's (CT-5) supportive housing legislation, which could provide thousands of new affordable housing units for low income, disabled individuals across the country.

"Connecticut has a dire need for permanent supportive housing. I believe that my legislation represents a fresh and innovative approach to improve the Section 811 program to help those in need," said Murphy.

Diane Randall, the executive director of the Partnership for Strong Communities in Hartford, testified at the hearing about how this bill will help people in Connecticut find affordable, supportive housing that meets their needs.

"This legislation offers valuable improvements that will have life-changing impact on thousands of vulnerable citizens in the United States by creating new opportunities for permanent supportive housing in mixed income communities," said Randall.

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 them in living independently. The demand for affordable, supportive housing outweighs the level of funding available - for example, the state's Next Steps Supportive Housing Initiative recently funded several hundred units, but almost 1400 units were left unfunded.

So working closely with those same experts, Murphy introduced legislation with Republican Congresswoman Judy Biggert (IL-13), the "Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act of 2008", 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.

"While the need is large and our challenge significant, we cannot allow this important program to continue to drift. My reform legislation will remove existing barriers, allowing federal funding to be used to leverage additional state, local, or private financing to build even more units of supportive housing," said Murphy.

Murphy's legislation is named after the late Frank Melville, a longtime resident of Northwestern 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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