



*Written Testimony before the Housing Committee  
Commissioner Andrea Barton Reeves  
Department of Social Services  
March 4, 2025*

**HOUSE BILL 7112: AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS AND THE RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

Section 15 of the bill requires DSS, within available appropriations, to develop and administer a pilot program to provide portable showers and laundry facilities to persons experiencing homelessness. The Department supports the intent of the bill; however, we believe that we are not the appropriate subject matter expert (SME) related to this topic. While DSS is known as the provider of basic needs, we do not believe that we have the expertise associated with homelessness and their specific needs. Rather, the Department of Housing (DOH) is the SME for housing and the homeless. Assigning this activity to DSS would create an administrative burden for the agency, as well as community partners that already have established relationships with DOH, municipalities, local Coordinated Access System (CANs) providers, homeless outreach providers, and the homeless population.

DSS acknowledges that hygiene improves physical and mental wellbeing; however, since the current homeless management information system tracks homeless persons, it would also create another barrier for the client to tell their story again just to gain access to the services. In researching this topic, DSS identified a program in California entitled Mobile Shower Program<sup>1</sup>. The program states, “*The mobile shower offerings have also provided opportunities for LAHSA outreach teams to engage with people experiencing homelessness and connect them to supportive services and housing, as well as for other service providers to offer clean clothing, hygiene products, and meals.*”

DSS would like to also acknowledge that the concept of portable showers is not new in Connecticut. In 2022, the City of New Haven and the organization Power in a Shower launched a project to provide mobile showers for the homeless<sup>2</sup> that continues to operate today.

DSS thanks this committee for its belief in our efforts towards its holistic service delivery model for CT’s most vulnerable persons; however, we believe that DOH would be the better state agency to lead this charge as homeless persons are already known to them.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lahsa.org/news?article=638-mobile-shower-program-offers-improved-hygiene-dignity/1000>

<sup>2</sup> <https://powerinashower.org/mobile-showers-in-new-haven-ct/>

Sec. 20. of the bill appropriates funding from the General Fund to provide grant-in-aid to local food pantries for the purpose of matching funds provided to such food pantries by municipalities. Again, DSS appreciates the intent of this section. However, while DSS does not know the total number of food pantries located in the state, we do know that the number there are at least 650 food pantries, meal programs, and mobile distribution sites throughout the state. The amount of funding needed to match funds provided to such entities by municipalities would be significant, as would the administrative burden on the department to contract, distribute, and monitor the funding to these pantries.

For these reasons, and as funding for these proposals was not allocated in the Governor's recommended budget, we cannot support these sections of the bill.