

## House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

### **Rep. Piscopo holds meeting concerning DCF group home in Harwinton**



State Rep. John Piscopo (R-Thomaston) today held a meeting at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford regarding a proposed group home at 25 Plymouth Road in Harwinton. Department of Children and Families staff, Harwinton First Selectman Frank Chiarmonite, and several concerned Harwinton residents were in attendance at the meeting. The meeting was arranged by Rep. Piscopo.

The STAR (Short Term And Respite) facility is slated by DCF to open sometime in March. During the hour-long meeting, DCF staff answered numerous questions from Piscopo, Chiarmonite and the concerned Harwinton residents present. Questions included background of STAR facilities, a community's ability to fight placement of a facility on the local level, staffing of such facilities and background of teens typically placed in such facilities.

Rep. Piscopo is now working to arrange a meeting in Harwinton with DCF staff, so that neighbors and all community residents can have their questions and concerns addressed.

“The process by which this home was sited is dramatically flawed, in that it does not allow for public input by residents living in the area who are most affected,” said Rep. Piscopo. “This raises serious questions which must be answered by DCF. My colleagues in the House and Senate proposed legislation last session to require that local authorities be informed about the location of group homes and that public hearings be held concerning the location of group homes. Unfortunately, the committee chairmen did not even allow these proposed bills to receive a public hearing. I can assure my constituents that I will continue to push for legislation requiring a public hearing before these group homes are placed. I look forward to working with DCF to seek a better solution for all parties involved.”

According to DCF, a STAR home houses youth removed from their homes by DCF for temporary placement. Targeted length of stay is 60 days, though on average, most in these facilities stay at least 70 days.

The facility will be licensed by DCF and operated by the Bridge Family Center, which operates similar facilities in West Hartford, Manchester, Southington and Wolcott. In most cases, the youths would not attend local schools but would be transported to schools in the communities where they previously resided.

Youths are not placed in STAR facilities because of delinquent behavior or because of behavioral or physical disabilities. There are currently 12 in operation in Connecticut, with a goal of 14. The facilities typically house all-male or all-female residents. The Harwinton facility is scheduled to be a female-only facility, housing up to 6 residents.