



## Hartford Foundation for Public Giving testimony on

**House Bill 6633, An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing**

**House Bill 6778, An Act Establishing a Proxy Address Program for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness or Housing Insecurity**

**House Bill 5326, An Act Concerning Affordable Housing Appeals Process and Removing the Municipal Opt-Out Deadline for Accessory Apartments**

**Housing Committee**

**February 28, 2023**

Good evening, Senator Moore, Representative Luxenberg, Senator Sampson, Representative Scott and distinguished members of the Housing Committee. **The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony in on House Bill 6633, An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing, House Bill 6778, An Act Establishing a Proxy Address Program for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness or Housing Insecurity, and House Bill 5326, An Act Concerning Affordable Housing Appeals Process and Removing the Municipal Opt-Out Deadline for Accessory Apartments.**

**The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region.** Over the past two years, the Foundation has distributed a record-breaking \$99 million in grants to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than \$940 million since its founding in 1925.

As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and improve social and economic mobility for Black and Latinx residents of Greater Hartford, the Hartford Foundation seeks to **increase the number of Hartford residents living in higher opportunity neighborhoods.** Higher opportunity neighborhoods are defined by a variety of factors, including low unemployment, better performing schools, lower crime and greater availability of quality, affordable housing stock.

The Hartford Foundation seeks to increase the numbers of Hartford residents living in higher opportunity neighborhoods both by increasing the opportunities in Hartford neighborhoods and by increasing the ability of Hartford residents to choose to move to other higher opportunity areas throughout the Greater Hartford region. In order to support these outcomes, the Foundation invests in efforts designed to increase the stability, availability, and quality of affordable housing in the Greater Hartford region; align and leverage additional investment in Hartford neighborhoods and increase social strength and connectedness of Hartford neighborhoods. COVID has reinforced the need for all of us to live in safe, stable homes, in safe, stable neighborhoods, in safe, stable communities.

Connecticut is one of the most racially and economically segregated states in the country with 74 percent of Black residents and 68 percent of Latinx residents living in census tracts assessed as low opportunity areas. The state has enabled municipalities to regulate certain land use through zoning. Exclusionary zoning practices have fostered this segregation for decades which has devastating consequences on residents, communities, schools, and our state's economy. For these reasons, **the Foundation offers its support for House Bill 6633, An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing.**



We know that the vast majority of deed restricted affordable housing, as well as naturally occurring affordable housing (such as multi-family homes and apartment buildings), are concentrated in urban areas such as Hartford. This segregation results in a concentration of poverty, primarily impacting Black and Latinx communities. The Hartford Foundation supports efforts to generate diverse housing, including more affordable housing, in higher opportunity areas throughout the state, providing people with more choices about where they wish to live. Hartford residents that wish to move to neighboring communities do not often get that choice.

In 2019 the Hartford Foundation provided a grant to support residents in Clay Arsenal Apartments, Barber Gardens, and Infill in Hartford, who wanted to move to areas of greater opportunity. All three complexes had their contracts with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development terminated due to conditions that threatened residents' health and safety. The Foundation awarded grants to the Center for Leadership and Justice and Open Communities Alliance who worked with tenants to provide leadership training, legal assistance, and technical advice to navigate the complex housing situation and relocation process. Of the 150 Clay Arsenal families who were relocated, 61 percent wanted to move to Hartford suburbs such as West Hartford, Glastonbury, and Windsor. However, the timing of the relocation process and lack of affordable housing options in communities outside of Hartford meant that most families had to relocate to housing in the same or similar neighborhoods.

Over the past two years, the Foundation has provided Housing Advocacy grants to support the Open Communities Alliance's creation and development of the Growing Together Connecticut coalition. This group is working to generate more housing choices throughout Connecticut and promote equitable revitalization of under-resourced communities. The effort focuses on Fair Share Planning and Zoning that positions each town in the state to lay the groundwork for long-term housing growth. In addition, Growing Together Connecticut calls for equitable reinvestments—especially in cities—to ensure that every community in the state can reach its full potential.

The Hartford Foundation supports **House Bill 6633, An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing**, which would require an assessment of the statewide need for affordable housing and an allocation of such need to planning regions and municipalities; the creation of affordable housing plans for each municipality; and evaluate municipalities' performance in meeting the requirements of these plans.

Modeled after a successful New Jersey law, this proposal seeks to analyze the state's actual affordable housing needs and then develop a shared plan with shared responsibilities to meet that need. The bill would require the state, in consultation with a diverse group of stakeholders, to develop technical assistance for municipalities as well as incentives and enforcement measures.

It is projected that the passage and successful implementation of Fair Share Planning and Zoning could create approximately 300,000 units of market rate and affordable housing over ten years to address Connecticut's crucial housing needs. This proposal would allow towns to develop their own plans and zone for growth by removing political barriers and help to ensure that all our residents have the ability to live in quality, affordable housing in high opportunity neighborhoods. Fair Share Planning and Zoning will create more integrated, vibrant communities and make our state an even better place to live, work and raise a family.

The Hartford Foundation supports **basic human needs** in our region, applying an equity lens to the systems and programs that address access to housing, food, physical and mental health, and the digital divide.

**While the Foundation and other philanthropic organizations have and will continue to support this work, the state must lead the effort to prevent and eliminate homelessness in Connecticut.** Public commitment must also address the interplay of basic human needs, including housing, and provide adequate support to the nonprofit organizations delivering these services.



**Hartford Foundation**

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The Foundation offers its support of **House Bill 6778, An Act Establishing a Proxy Address Program for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness or Housing Insecurity**. The lack of a home address can be a significant obstacle for people experiencing homelessness or housing instability attempting to apply for jobs, enroll their children in school and apply for services and benefits. By removing this obstacle, individuals will be in a better position to find jobs and other supports that can help lead to finding permanent housing.

**The Foundation is opposed to House Bill 5326, An Act Concerning Affordable Housing Appeals Process and Removing the Municipal Opt-Out Deadline for Accessory Apartments** which seeks to weaken Connecticut's only enforcement of affordable housing regulations known as 8-30g. This bill would allow municipalities to include unrestricted homes affordable to those at 80 percent of average median income (AMI) into the calculation of the ten per cent threshold for the affordable housing appeals procedure and remove the deadline for any municipality to opt-out of the as-of-right allowance of accessory apartments. At a time when the state is experiencing an affordable housing crisis, this proposal would not create a single new affordable home and would provide towns with another tool to avoid providing their fair share of affordable housing.

Section 8-30g does not represent an unfair intrusion on local zoning authority as it does not require any town to build housing. The regulation simply ensures that when a developer proposes building inclusionary housing, a town must show good reasons for objecting to it. Many Connecticut towns are failing to provide residents with the type of smaller, denser, affordable homes within walking distance to stores, services and public transit that the state needs to thrive.

As we have seen with the Clay Arsenal example, Section 8-30g is not a panacea but represents a vital tool to promote the development of more affordable homes to ensure resident choice in housing. As our state looks to develop additional policies to expand access to affordable housing, Section 8-30g helps to ensure that a town cannot avoid affordable housing development by enacting exclusionary local zoning policies or cite a lack of demand for housing. Furthermore, towns looking to develop affordable housing can achieve a four-year moratorium from Section 8-30g. This provides municipalities the time to create their own plans without state involvement. Towns that fail to achieve these goals should not be looking to weaken or overturn effective state policy, but rather work to improve their local regulations.

The Foundation looks forward to continuing its work with policymakers, nonprofits and residents to develop effective long-term policies to ensure that all Connecticut residents have access to quality, affordable housing in higher opportunity neighborhoods.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our staff at [policy@hfp.org](mailto:policy@hfp.org) or 860-548-1888.