



**Hartford Foundation for Public Giving testimony on**  
**Senate Bill 980, An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State**  
**Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee**  
**April 3, 2023**

Good evening, Senator Fonfara, Representative Horn, Senator Martin, Representative Cheeseman and distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. **The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony on Senate Bill 980, An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State, specifically as it relates to Governor Lamont's proposal to allocate \$300 million in each year of the biennium for housing projects and programs.**

**The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford 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 number of Hartford residents living in higher opportunity neighborhoods both by increasing 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.

**While the Foundation and other philanthropic organizations have and will continue to support this work, the state must lead the effort to ensure that every Connecticut resident can have access to an affordable home in a high opportunity neighborhood.** Public commitment must also address the interplay of basic human needs, including housing, and provide adequate support to the nonprofit organizations delivering these services.

Last year, the Hartford Foundation awarded the Hartford Land Bank a grant to support local urban developers who are often challenged due to the cost of redeveloping older, blighted properties in a city like Hartford because it often exceeds the price at which the property could reasonably be sold to a potential homeowner. The Land Bank advocated for the creation of a funding mechanism to support housing development in urban communities. After convening groups of local developers, community development corporations, advocates and financial institutions, the Hartford Land Bank drafted a proposal to support investment in urban communities that will make it possible to create generational wealth building in neighborhoods that have suffered from decades of disinvestment. This led to the legislature's approval of a \$20 million for a new homeownership subsidy in qualified census tracts in collaboration with local Community Development Financial Institutions.

In addition to investing in our cities we must address the systemic policies that have led to this concentration of poverty and lack of mobility for urban residents. The Foundation has been investing in resident education, organizing and advocacy in our suburban and rural areas to better understand the history of inequitable housing policy, redlining, and exclusionary zoning and how it has created the extreme racial segregation we see today. While we hope that by



educating residents, town planners, planning and zoning officials and others, we will see change, we know that to truly address this issue intervention at the state level is needed.

To support these efforts, the Hartford Foundation is a part of the statewide HOMEConnecticut Campaign. The mission of HOMEConnecticut is to ensure everyone in Connecticut has access to safe, stable, accessible, and affordable housing in an equitable community of their choice. The Foundation and many partners throughout the state recognize that when people have stable housing, their economic and health outcomes improve.

Conservative estimates have shown that Connecticut has a shortage of at least 86,000 rental homes, affordable and available for extremely low-income renters. Building material prices have risen 33 percent since the start of the pandemic, creating additional barriers to housing development. According to the [2023 edition of the Greater Hartford Community Wellbeing Index](#), rising housing expenses have exacerbated the problem, as about one third of households are significantly burdened by housing costs.

Forty-nine percent of renters are generally burdened by housing costs with higher shares among Black and Latino renters. Rising housing expenses are also reflected in increased eviction and homeless rates. Funding affordable housing is an investment in Connecticut's economy – creating jobs, increasing household incomes, and generating new tax revenue. Every \$1 of state funding leverages \$4.57 of private investment. These millions of dollars in private investment create thousands of jobs and support the stability of many more jobs. A greater supply of affordable homes prevents homelessness and reliance by our most vulnerable residents on other expensive systems of care and safety net programs, allowing the state to invest those resources elsewhere.

**The Foundation applauds the Governor's recognition of the overwhelming need for more housing in Connecticut through this proposal to invest \$200 million in the Housing Trust Fund in Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025. This proposal will also provide \$100 million to support Flexible Housing funding in each fiscal year.**

This funding will also support the redevelopment of affordable homes in the State-Sponsored Housing Portfolio that typically serve low-income, disabled, or elderly renters. **This \$600 million in new bond authorizations would represent a significant and much-needed investment in housing, representing twice the investment in the previous biennium. This funding would provide for an estimated 2,200 additional homes in each fiscal year.**

The Foundation looks forward to continuing its work with policymakers, nonprofits, philanthropy, and residents to develop effective long-term policies that will ensure all Connecticut residents have access to safe, secure and affordable housing.

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