



**Hartford Foundation for Public Giving testimony on
House Bill 5390, An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Communities
Planning and Development Committee
March 6, 2024**

Good evening, Senator Rahman, Representative Kavros DeGraw, Senator Fazio, Representative Zullo, and distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee. **The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 5390, An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Communities and House Bill 5391.**

This bill would not only help to provide easier access to public transportation but also would create the density necessary to make it economically viable to construct quality, affordable housing for low- and middle-income Connecticut residents.

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 \$104.5 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 \$998 million since its founding in 1925.

As part of our strategic commitment to work with community partners to dismantle structural racism and advance equitable social and economic mobility for Black and Latine 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, greater availability of quality, affordable housing.

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 the social strength and connectedness of Hartford neighborhoods.

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

The Hartford Foundation applauds House Bill 5390, An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Communities, with its efforts to support the development of housing by providing financial incentives for municipalities that adopt certain transit-oriented development policies through the Office of Responsible Growth.

The Foundation also supports directing the state responsible growth coordinator to establish a fund for the expansion of water and sewerage infrastructure, which can help to remove significant barriers to building multiunit housing in many communities. We also support allowing the coordinator to provide additional funding for certain infrastructure projects and including transit-oriented districts in the definition of housing growth zones.

We also appreciate the proposal establishing an interagency council on housing development to advise and assist the state responsible growth coordinator in reviewing regulations, developing guidelines, and establishing programs to support the responsible growth of housing in Connecticut. Coordination across the many agencies involved in this work is essential to promoting collaboration and examining challenges across systems.

According to Census data, Connecticut is one of the most racially and economically segregated states in the country, with 74 percent of Black residents and 68 percent of Latine 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 had devastating consequences on residents, communities, schools, and our state's economy.

According to [research conducted by the Urban Institute](#), 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 concentration of poverty, primarily impacting Black and Latine residents. **The Hartford Foundation offers its support for efforts to generate diverse housing options, including affordable housing in higher opportunity areas throughout the state, providing people with more choices about where they wish to live.**

As part of its effort to make affordable, stable, and higher quality housing more accessible to low-income residents of color and residents encountering housing barriers, the Hartford Foundation offered a grant focused on supporting housing policy and advocacy activities. This work included a grant to the [Center for Latino Progress](#) and its [Transport Hartford Academy](#).

to advocate for Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) at the municipal, regional, and statewide level. This work focuses on advocating for the inclusion of Transit Oriented Development in the Affordable Housing Plans of West Hartford, Newington, and Windsor. It also includes feedback from residents in the Parkville section of Hartford about their housing needs and from stakeholders involved in the redevelopment of this neighborhood.

The Hartford Foundation has seen from our Employment Opportunities work how access to transportation is critical in securing and sustaining employment, especially for the many residents who do not drive or do not have cars. This legislation recognizes the essential nature of living near transportation and promotes development of additional transportation hubs.

The Foundation has invested in [Desegregate CT's](#) advocacy and organizing efforts to support its Work Live Ride transit-oriented communities initiative, reduce minimum lot size requirements, and streamline zoning bureaucracy.

As the state has received an unprecedented infusion of federal infrastructure funding for public transportation, this timely proposal would help more Connecticut residents have access to mass transit options. Transit oriented development directly benefits workers and families who rely on public transit as well as the many employers looking for reliable workers. In addition, municipalities benefit from increased property tax revenues and grand list growth from new construction.

Many Greater Hartford residents lack adequate access to transportation. According to the [Greater Hartford Community Wellbeing Index 2023](#), the rate of transportation insecurity was 21 percent for those who did not attend college and 32 percent for adults making less than \$30,000 per year. Vehicle availability varies by race and ethnicity and by the number of workers in the home. Among households with at least one working-age member but without any employed members, 59 percent of Black households and 52 percent of Latine households had no access to a vehicle. Only 21 percent of White households in this group lacked vehicle access. In households with one employed adult, 18 percent of Black households lacked vehicle access and 17 percent of Latine households lacked access to a vehicle. This compared to three percent of white households with one employed adult lacking vehicle access. In many parts of Greater Hartford, having



access to a vehicle is needed to find and keep a job. Racial disparities in access to a vehicle or other transportation options can exacerbate racial disparities in employment opportunities and income levels.

We have seen how restrictive zoning acts as a barrier to residents trying to access public transit. Incentivizing communities to create housing opportunities near transit is a crucial step in the ongoing efforts to reform Connecticut's antiquated and discriminatory approach to zoning, which has deprived our state of much needed housing development.

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 or 860-548-1888.