



**TESTIMONY OF ERIN BOGGS, ESQ.
OF THE CONNECTICUT FAIR HOUSING CENTER
IN OPPOSITION TO AMENDMENTS TO THE
AFFORDABLE HOUSING APPEALS ACT, C.G.S. §8-30g**

My name is Erin Boggs and I am an attorney and the Deputy Director of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. I submit this testimony generally in opposition to weakening the Affordable Housing Appeals Act because of its significance to affirmatively furthering fair housing in Connecticut.

The Connecticut Fair Housing Center is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring that everyone in the state has access to housing of their choice free from discrimination. We carry out our work through civil rights litigation and advocacy on behalf of victims of housing discrimination and research and policy development in the areas of racial segregation and access to opportunity.

In Connecticut we are living with a legacy of government-sponsored segregation that has far reaching consequences for the well-being of everyone in our state. The Affordable Housing Appeals Act, in its current form, plays a crucial role in helping the State address segregation and, in doing so helps Connecticut fulfill a federal legal obligation to reverse this legacy. This obligation is called the duty to affirmatively furthering fair housing. Others testifying today will address the dearth of affordable housing in Connecticut and the success of the Act. I will focus my remarks on the issue of racial isolation.

People of color comprise 29% of the population of Connecticut. This percentage has grown from 12% in 1980.¹ By 2020 almost 50% of Connecticut’s 18-25 year-old population will be comprised of people of color.² If not for these increases, Connecticut would have negative population growth, which can have severe negative economic implications.

Connecticut’s population of color is disproportionately low income. Blacks earn, on average, only 55% of what Whites earn.³ Hispanics earn only 44% of what non-Hispanic Whites earn.⁴ This means that in order to have racial integration, we must promote the creation of affordable housing in a diversity of locations.

It should be critical to everyone in the state that this “workforce of the future” has access to all the benefits, like great schools and safe neighborhoods, available to most residents of our state. However, Connecticut’s population of color is racially segregated into poverty-concentrated areas that are struggling. Based on an analysis by researchers at Harvard University, the Bridgeport area is the 8th most segregated metropolitan area out of 362 areas across the country in terms of Hispanic/Non-Hispanic White segregation.⁵ By this same measure, the Hartford area ranks as the 9th most segregated. The New Haven area ranks 20th and the New London-Norwich area ranks 72nd.

¹ Sources: Census 2000 table SF1 P19, Census 2010 SF1 table P20

² Coelen, Stephen and Berger, Joseph B., *New England 2020: A Forecast of Educational Attainment and its Implications for the Workforce for New England States*, Nellie Mae Foundation, 2006, at vii. Available at http://www.endpovertynewengland.org/pdf/New_England_2020.pdf.

³ Source: ACS 2006 to 2010 Table B19101D.

⁴ Id.

⁵ See Harvard University’s DiversityData.org, available at <http://diversitydata.sph.harvard.edu/Data/Rankings/Show.aspx?ind=163&tf=38&sortby=Value&sortChs=1&sort=LowToHigh¬es=True&rt=MetroArea&rgn>ShowAll>.

How do Connecticut Areas Stack Up? Hispanic/Non-Hispanic White Segregation	
Region	National ranking (by severity of segregation out of 362 Metro Areas)
Hartford, CT	9 th
Bridgeport, CT	8 th
New Haven, CT	20 th
New London/Norwich CT	72 nd

For Black/White segregation, the Bridgeport area is the 18th most segregated out of 362 regions. The Hartford area ranks 34th worst nationally and the New Haven and New London/Norwich areas enter the rankings at 42nd and 128th worst, respectively.

How do Connecticut Areas Stack Up? Non-Hispanic Black/Non-Hispanic White Segregation	
Region	National ranking (by severity of segregation out of 362 Metro Areas)
Hartford, CT	34 th
Bridgeport, CT	18 th
New Haven, CT	42 nd
New London/Norwich CT	128 th

Connecticut’s stark racial segregation is particularly troubling when considering the effect it has on the opportunities available to people of color. To better understand the dimensions of this inequity, in 2009 the Connecticut Fair Housing Center commissioned a report from the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, *“People, Place and Opportunity: Mapping Communities of Opportunity in Connecticut,”* (“Opportunity Mapping Study”), which uses eleven data points, such as school performance, mean commute time, poverty, to assess

the opportunity available in each census tract in Connecticut.⁶ Through use of this method we determined that 81% of African-Americans and 79% of Latinos but only 25.8% of Non-Hispanic Whites in Connecticut live in lower opportunity areas (See Map 1).⁷ Living in a lower opportunity area means our future workforce will not have access to high-performing schools that give them the tools they need to succeed. People of color will continue to have poorer health because they will lack access to stores with inexpensive, fresh food. We will condemn another generation of children to live in neighborhoods where gunshots are commonplace and parks are frightening not places to play. Our report concludes that we must do two things: bring targeted resources to lower opportunity areas and connect people of color to higher opportunity areas through means such as affordable housing.

Some serious steps have been taken to address half of this equation, for example the Malloy administration has allocated additional funding to struggling schools, but little has been done on the other half of the equation – connecting people to higher opportunity areas. We know for example that the best way to close the achievement gap is to ensure that children attend mixed-income schools and the most efficient, cost effect way to make that happen is by creating affordable housing opportunities in more affluent areas.

Retaining the Affordable Housing Appeals Act *in its current form* is one critical tool to counteract the deep lines of racial and economic isolation in this state. The future of this state and the country is an ethnically diverse and multicultural. If we fail to open opportunities, particularly educational opportunities, to the full diversity of our population we will be

⁶ This report is available at: <http://kirwaninstitute.org/research/projects/ct-opp-mapping/index.php>. The data points are Education (math and reading test score and educational attainment), Economic Opportunity (unemployment, population on public assistance, job growth, and mean commute time) and Neighborhood/Housing Quality (vacancy rate, crime rate, poverty rate and home ownership rate), see pg. 7. This report articulates a view similar to the “zip code” discussions of HUD Deputy Secretary Ron Sims and concepts within the HUD Strategic Plan for 2010-2015.

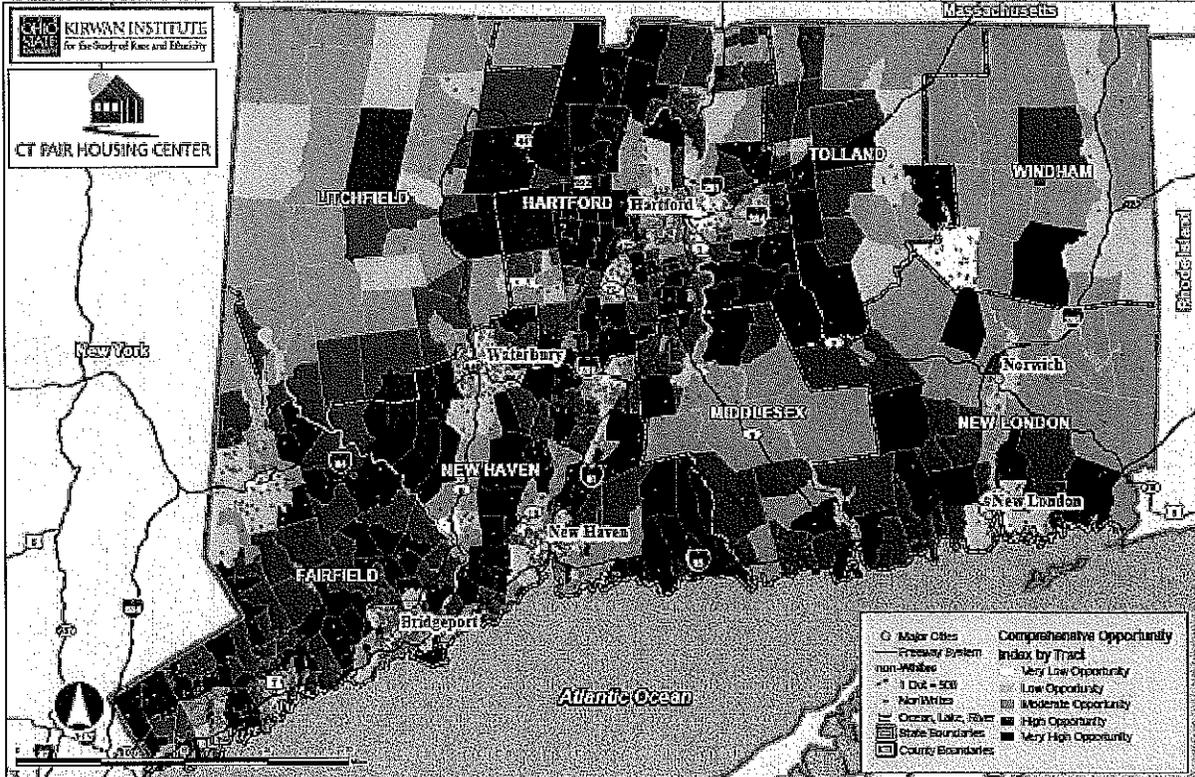
⁷ See id. at pg. 12.

committing a tremendous injustice and putting the breaks on a significant and growing portion of Connecticut's economic engine. The Affordable Housing Appeals Act is balanced, effective and in the best interest of Connecticut.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

This map displays the spatial pattern of distribution of opportunity by census tract based on Education, Economic & Mobility, and Housing & Neighborhood indicators, overlaid with non-White population.

Source: GIS Center, ©2008, ESRI Business Analyst, DECD and MDCG Data, August 21, 2008



Map 1: Comprehensive Opportunity with Race Overlay

