

Statement of Geoffrey Sager, Metro Realty, Farmington

Connecticut General Assembly

HOUSING COMMITTEE

February 8, 2013

**COMMENTS TO BILLS RELATING TO STATUTES § 8-30g,
THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING LAND USE APPEALS ACT**

I am sure many of you saw and much will be discussed here today regarding the education achievement gap between majority and minority races in Connecticut which is the largest in the country. Affordable housing in suburbs will begin to address this with comparatively minimal up front subsidy AND NO ON-GOING SUBSIDY. A student living in affordable housing in Avon, Farmington or Berlin, as an example, and attending High School there, is extremely likely to graduate and proceed to College. For those students who graduate from a two or a four year College, the cycle of poverty is almost certainly broken. This is why we are so passionate about building affordable housing in the suburbs – because we believe it is the best strategy to break the cycle of poverty.

As President Obama declared in the 2010 State of the Union Address, *“...in the 21st century, the best anti-poverty program around is a world-class education. And in this country, the success of our children cannot depend more on where they live than on their potential...”*

Suburban schools in Connecticut are among the best public schools in the United States. Connecticut is unique because some of the nation’s most challenged school systems are adjacent to some of the nation’s best school systems. Our housing policy in Connecticut should recognize this fact and provide big incentives for the construction of affordable family housing in suburbs that will allow some families to move a very short distance for a better education.

The impact of substandard and unaffordable housing is being felt on Connecticut’s economy. The parents seeking better education for their children are integral to Connecticut’s workforce. Much of Connecticut’s recent job growth is in retail and other comparatively low wage paying jobs. We will not induce new companies to locate to Connecticut or retain existing companies unless those companies can find suitable housing their employees can afford within close proximity of the workplace – and by definition that means where those employees can be assured that their children are provided a first class education. Each affordable housing unit developed in a suburban community contributes to closing the education achievement gap and provides a unit of work force housing that benefits the State’s economic development strategy.

While we applaud Connecticut’s overall commitment to national trends, such as Transit Oriented Development, we submit for your consideration the need to leverage a unique Connecticut advantage – our excellent suburban public school systems. Connecticut’s suburbs contain many of our nations’ best public schools within close proximity to some of the nations’ most disadvantaged public schools. Affordable housing constructed in these suburban communities quickly moves disadvantaged students into Connecticut’s suburban public schools. As a result of

the close proximity, parents can maintain their place of employment, worship, familial ties, etc. A student graduating from one of these suburban high schools is highly likely to attend college, likely to graduate college and likely to attain a level of employment where they will have the opportunity to own their own home. The objective is to break the cycle so that the grown and educated child does not need rental housing subsidies. This has been a fundamental tenet of affordable housing since its inception.

If we are going to have fewer impoverished families, we have to break the generational cycle of poverty. Magnet Schools and improved inner City schools contribute to the same objective, but education in Connecticut's suburbs can easily be an important part of the solution. We have constructed four quality family affordable rental housing communities in Avon, Berlin and Farmington and have witnessed this phenomenon. Only one of the four developments involved litigation. Three of the four developments were welcomed by the host community. Even the Town where we litigated was extraordinarily accommodating, and we enjoy an excellent long term track record and relationship with it. These development contribute to the vibrancy and the diversity of the Towns where they are located while placing no disproportionate burden on Town resources.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Sager". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.