

HB 5058, the

**North Haven Opportunity for Affordable Housing, Inc.
P.O. Box 813
North Haven, CT 06473**

Good morning, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Butler and members of the Housing Committee. My name is Lorraine Martin, and I am Treasurer of North Haven Opportunity for Affordable Housing (NHOAH), an ecumenical, faith based, non-profit developer. I am submitting testimony on the bills before you today that address §8-30g of the Connecticut General Statutes. I understand many of the bills before your committee would revise or eliminate the Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Process. However, I urge you to leave it unchanged and in place because it has worked well and benefited many Connecticut families. NHOAH has been the beneficiary of a favorable ruling under the statute, allowing the development of twenty units of affordable housing in North Haven, a town which until that point had only a minimal amount of affordable housing for seniors and nothing for families.

In 1997, NHOAH, proposed twenty-four units of affordable housing on a five-acre parcel in North Haven. Planning and Zoning turned us down, citing traffic, parking and density concerns. We re-applied, lowering the number of units to twenty, and were turned down again. We appealed the decision to the Connecticut Superior Court as allowed under Section 8-30g and Judge Linda Munro ruled in our favor. The Department of Housing and Community Development awarded us \$2.4 million in HOME funds and we built Summerdale, a development of twenty affordable family homes, completing it in 2004. As we had hoped, eight of the original families have been able to move up to market rate homes and have sold their condominiums, returning their buyer subsidy to NHOAH. NHOAH continues to monitor the maximum resale price and the eligibility of potential buyers and to award subsidy funds as needed.

The reality is that very little affordable housing could be developed in suburban communities without the help of Section 8-30g. At the public zoning hearings, nobody will ever admit to “having anything against affordable housing” but there are always reasons why “it just isn’t right for that site.” Several North Haven town officials admitted to us privately that they were personally in favor of NHOAH’s proposal in 1997, but that political expediency required that they be able to say that they were “ordered” by the state to allow it. Towns like North Haven will never reach the goal of 10% affordable housing unless we have the ability to fall back on this statute because public opinion will always sway the elected officials against such developments. Please don’t eliminate this essential component of affordable housing development. The recent formation of a dedicated Housing Department in Connecticut recognizes the need for affordable housing in our state but changes to the Land Use Appeals process can only hinder developers who are hoping to provide housing for low income families.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee.

Respectfully,

Lorraine A. Martin, Treasurer
North Haven Opportunity for Affordable Housing, Inc.
P.O. Box 813
North Haven, CT 06473