

AB 5058, etc

Date: February 14, 2013

To: Hon. Danté Bartolomeo, Co-Chair
Hon. Larry B. Butler, Co-Chair
Members of the Housing Committee

From: Patrick J. Flaherty, former State Representative

Re: Opposition to changes to the Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Butler and members of the Housing Committee, as a former State Representative (8th District) and former Co-Chair of the Select Committee on Housing, I am writing to oppose the bills before you today that are designed to alter or eliminate the state's Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure (C.G.S. §8-30g).

As Co-Chair of the Select Committee on Housing, and as Co-Chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission to Study Affordable Housing, I along with my Co-Chairs, and other Committee and Commission members traveled throughout Connecticut to see the housing that was developed as a result of §8-30g. What we saw was housing that had been extremely controversial at the time it had been proposed that had become home to residents who were welcomed by their new neighbors and who were contributing to their communities. Some of the housing was occupied by long-time residents of the town in which it had been built who were able to return or remain in their hometowns because of the opportunity provided by the development of affordable housing. The housing was attractive, well maintained, and had minimal negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood and enormous positive impacts for the citizens and taxpayers who were able to call this housing "home."

We all know that Connecticut is an expensive state. We have one of the highest percentages of families that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. In addition, according to the US Census Bureau, in 2011, Connecticut ranked 50th among the 50 states for the number of housing units built per capita while more than 40 percent of households paid more than 30 percent of income on housing costs. Our home rental prices are 6th highest in the country. Our particular need is for workforce housing; our nurses, teachers, and firemen can't afford to live in the towns where they work and often commute long distances between home and their employment. This is no time to eliminate and eviscerate a twenty-two year old statute that has resulted in the building of over 5,000 "deed restricted" housing units.

We are a state that faces a demographic challenge. Our population is aging and increasing numbers of our older citizens, thankfully, have the health and vitality to "age in place." But a productive workforce requires workers of all ages, and younger workers, at the beginning of their careers, do not often command the salaries and income necessary to afford adequate housing for themselves and their families in much of our state. The affordable housing appeals procedure is one tool to help our state meet this need. Now is not the time to weaken that tool.

The statute works, for renters and municipalities. Since the statute was enacted, the courts have ruled in favor of town decisions that were based on legitimate objections such as traffic safety or sewer issues. Opponents who predict rising crime rates or increased traffic congestion have been proven wrong and in several cases town officials have found affordable housing development to be beneficial for their municipalities.

I urge the Committee and members of the General Assembly to educate themselves about the impact and quality of housing that has been built as a result of §8-30g. Think about the values that we want to see reflected in our communities and think how we can promote a vibrant state economy.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. I would certainly be happy to speak with any member of the Committee or the legislature about this important statute at any time.

Sincerely yours,

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