



State of Connecticut

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Testimony in support of

HB 5060 An Act Concerning the Affordability Term of Set-Aside Developments
HB 5155 An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Senior Housing as Affordable Housing
HB 5220 An Act Revising the Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Process

Housing Committee

February 14, 2013

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Butler, Senator McKinney, Representative Miller, and members of the Housing Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you.

Section 8-30g of the general statutes recognized Connecticut's need for affordable housing and attempted to address it through changes to the appeals process for municipal zoning decisions. Ideally, 8-30g would lead to a balanced approach to affordable housing on the local level – one that would require municipalities to provide badly needed affordable housing while allowing them in turn to require developers to respect their local planning objectives. Unfortunately, however, developers have been able to override a municipality's local plan, because 8-30g allows them to appeal a local decision in court if affordable housing represents less than 10% of a municipality's total housing stock.

I believe it is important to continue to promote the development of affordable housing, but in a way that allows municipalities to make decisions related to established guidelines for their communities. This means taking a thoughtful approach to revising 8-30g in a way that maintains this balance.

HB 5220 would amend the statutes to permit more thorough consideration of a community's specificities when determining if a developer can invoke the appeals procedure under 8-30g. It

would exempt certain towns from the appeals procedure by expanding the definition of accessory apartments and by eliminating universal use of the 10% threshold figure and substituting a more flexible and realistic percentage calculated on a town-by-town basis, taking into account a town's total housing, single family housing stock, infrastructure which can accommodate a higher density of units, and the effects of development on designated historic districts. It would also determine housing costs and define affordability with reference to figures specific to the town as opposed to a state or area median.

HB 5155 would allow a municipality to include senior housing when calculating its total number of affordable housing units for the purposes of establishing its eligibility for an exception from the provisions of section 8-30g. Including senior housing in the calculation provides a more accurate picture of affordable housing availability in a particular city or town.

HB 5060 would require affordable units in set-aside developments to remain affordable in perpetuity rather than allowing deed restrictions to sunset after forty years. This would lead to the preservation of each municipality's affordable housing landscape over time and facilitate long-term planning and adherence to local planning and zoning requirements. Section 8-30g continues to play an important role in encouraging the development of affordable housing. I believe these proposals may help our communities maintain a balance between meeting Connecticut's needs for affordable housing and fulfilling their own local planning objectives, and I thank the Committee for considering them.