

**TESTIMONY OF FIONNUALA DARBY-HUDGENS  
TRINITY COLLEGE CLASS OF 2013  
IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 6574  
CREATING A TASK FORCE TO  
CONSIDER IMPEDIMENTS TO FAIR HOUSING CHOICE  
March 18, 2013**

Senator Cassano, Representative Rojas, Senator Fasano, and Representative Aman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony, which is in strong support of H.B. 6574. I am an adult student and senior at Trinity College, where I am completing my thesis that examines statistical relationships between zoning, housing, and school performance. Working with the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, I analyzed residential zoning ordinances for all municipalities in the state, and coded them according by the degree of restrictions against affordable housing. The data is now publically available at the Cities Suburbs and Schools Project website at Trinity (<http://commons.trincoll.edu/cssp/zoning/>) and will be considered in the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice report. The experience of collecting this data, and the results of my preliminary analysis, demonstrate several reasons why municipal zoning policies in Connecticut must be thoughtfully reviewed to consider how they affect the state's ability to remain economically competitive by allowing a wide range of housing in every town.

Comparing municipal zoning ordinances across Connecticut is made difficult due to the lack of uniform terms across towns. For instance, zoning definitions such as "multifamily," "accessory dwelling," "affordable housing," elderly housing," and "mixed-use" vary greatly between municipalities. Such variations make it challenging to draw conclusions about which town zoning schemes are effective for creating mixed-income Smart Growth development. Second, the geographic area of specific residential zones is

difficult to assess because most towns do not report them by size. In other words, a municipal ordinance may state that an affordable housing zone exists, but not state whether it measures 5 acres, 50 acres, or 500 acres. Without uniform reporting requirements, Connecticut cannot make meaningful comparisons between local zoning policies within its own borders.

Based on our reading of all municipal zoning policies across Connecticut, my thesis confirms that exclusionary zoning exists in this state, and is a direct barrier to fair housing. The data confirms that 97 municipalities do not have any policy permitting affordable housing in their zoning ordinances.

A task force that explores the variability and impact of residential zoning policy, and develops a strategy for providing municipalities with resources and education to reform zoning policy, is an essential piece of ending impediments to fair housing across the state of Connecticut. Housing affects health, employment, education, and civic engagement. Zoning policy clearly is a part of this equation that inevitably affects building a greater state. Through the Analysis of Impediments Taskforce, a thoughtful group of experts can suggest more effective action steps to convert town zoning practices into policies that promote a better Connecticut.