



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE PATRICIA A. DILLON
NINETY SECOND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ROOM 4019
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591
HOME: (203) 387-6159
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8585
TOLL FREE: (800) 842-8267
FAX: (860) 240-0067
E-MAIL: Patricia.Dillon@cga.ct.gov

MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT
ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

February 27, 2014
Commerce Committee
Testimony of Representative Pat Dillon
In Support of HB 5004

Bill 5004 expands the Historic Home Tax Credit program, at one time \$10 million, and now only \$3 million, to \$13 million. This has been essential in stabilizing vulnerable neighborhoods in New Haven, leveraging private investment, creating local jobs, promoting home ownership, and protecting precious architectural assets and our own sense of our history.

My district's involvement with neighborhood preservation began in the 1980's with a task force to stabilize what was then the most stigmatized area in the city. They identified the area near the St Raphael's campus for investment in preservation and home ownership. Many believed the plan foolhardy: with gang violence, blighted buildings, and flight of homeowners, the area seemed doomed and many saw historic preservation as elitist.

But activists opened eyes to the beauty of our own streets. They worked with families to take ownership and stay. This was an act of hope, and a risk, but also rewards. As you can see in the photographs, when they pulled rotted asbestos siding off of 'blighted buildings' they found architectural treasures. Thanks to the geographic targeting of tax credits, these buildings were saved. What you cannot see are the families who live in those buildings today. They took a risk, and now anchor our community. Why was this risky? The reason is simple: location. If you buy the worst house in an affluent area, you can get back your investment. Precious buildings from the 19th century represented our history, but in those locations, the financials did not work without the targeted program.

Today we are proud of our successes. The major complaint had been that the \$25,000 threshold was too high, and participation was too low. SB 1131 from last year lowered it to \$15,000, which is a good thing. But the geographic targeting that stabilizes transitional neighborhoods was removed, and the dollars are the same, so it is unlikely we will benefit.

To continue our efforts, there appear to be three options: **A.** restores last year's language, keeping the money the same; **B.** add \$7 million and divide dollars equally between targeted areas and statewide; or **C.** add \$10 million or more without targeting. The bill before you is option **C**; if there are budget constraints option **B** is a more affordable compromise. I am optimistic about working with you and the executive branch so that we can promote home ownership and preservation together.

I'm excited to tell you our story, and invite you to visit New Haven and see what we have done together. The families that restored our heritage with this program are pioneers. Please let us continue our work and support this legislation.

