



**TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT FAIR HOUSING CENTER
IN OPPOSITION TO**

S.B. 123, S.B. 171, S.B. 403, S.B. 407, H.B. 5055, H.B. 5056, H.B. 5057, H.B. 5254, H.B. 5306, H.B. 5576, H.B. 5577, H.B. 5578, H.B. 5579, H.B. 5580, H.B. 5581, H.B. 5803, H.B. 5804, H.B. 5805, H.B. 6126, H.B. 6127, H.B. 6128, H.B. 6129, H.B. 6130, H.B. 6131, H.B. 6135, H.B. 6139, H.B. 6140, H.B. 6145, H.B. 6146

Good evening. My name is Pam Heller. I am a Staff Attorney at the Connecticut Fair Housing Center (hereinafter “the Center”), a state-wide non-profit organization that is dedicated to ensuring that all residents of this state have equal access to housing opportunities in Connecticut. I want to thank Senator Winfield, Representative Butler, and the Committee for giving me the chance to discuss the important bills on today’s agenda.

The Center opposes any changes that would weaken the effect of the statute known as 8-30g or the Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Act. As an agency that promotes housing choice the Center opposes efforts to restrict where people can choose to live. Accordingly there are three reasons we oppose the weakening of 8-30g. First, Connecticut has a significant shortage of affordable housing which severely affects the state’s marginalized citizens including low-income households, African-Americans, Latinos, people with disabilities, and single-parent households. Second, affordable housing in Connecticut is concentrated in economically, racially, and ethnically segregated areas. There remains a great need for affordable housing in a variety of locations across the state to combat long-standing patterns of segregation and promote fair housing choice. Finally, despite recent and admirable efforts by the state to invest in

affordable housing, the need for the protections of 8-30g are just as strong as they were when the legislation was passed in 1989.

Connecticut's Most Vulnerable Citizens Need Affordable Housing

In Connecticut, low-income households, African-Americans, Latinos, people with disabilities, and single-parent households have a disproportionate need for affordable housing.¹ Statewide, 74% of households with incomes under \$50,000 including both renters and homeowners pay at least 30% of their income for housing.² Eighty-eight percent of the lowest income households (households with income less than \$20,000) pay more than 30% of their income for housing. Latinos have nearly five times the poverty rate of Whites while African-Americans having nearly four times the poverty rate of Whites. People with disabilities and single-parent households have significantly higher poverty rates than those households not in a protected class. As a result, the lack of affordable housing has a disproportionate impact on these households.

In addition, as this Committee heard earlier this week, there is also a need to create affordable housing for young professionals and working class people like firefighters and teachers. Volunteer firefighters, for example, are having difficulty finding affordable housing in the very towns in which they serve. Any weakening of 8-30g will result in fewer affordable housing units and leave many Connecticut residents with fewer choices of where to live.

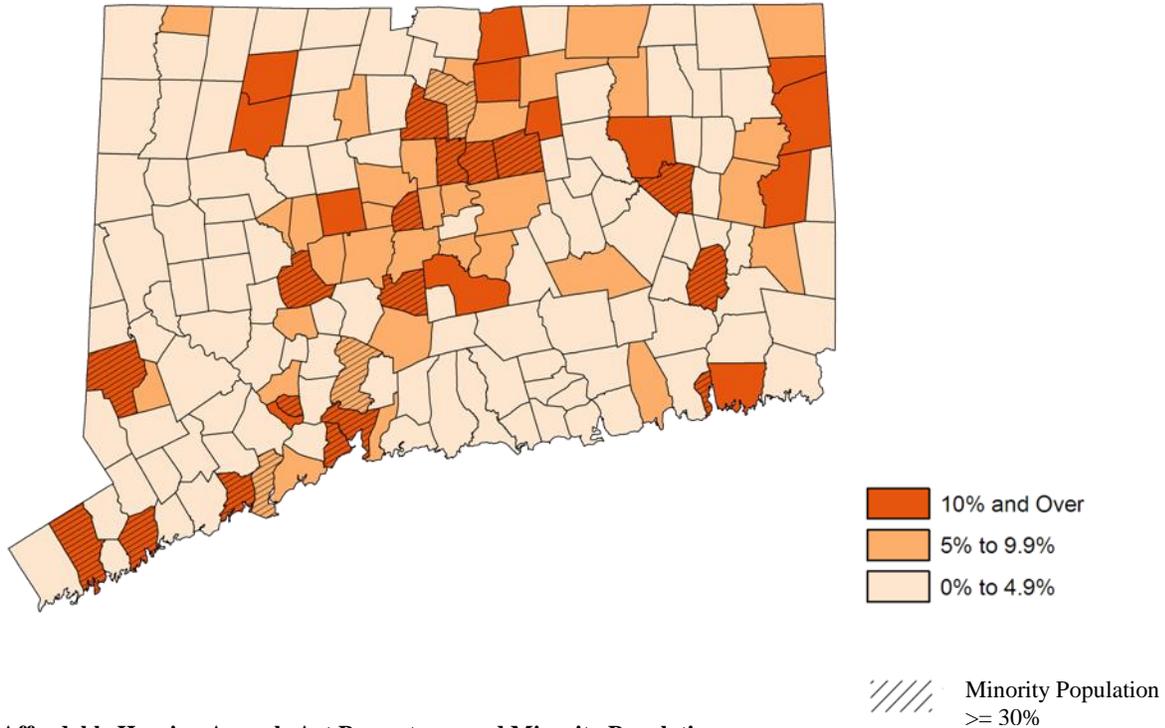
¹ American Community Survey 2010 1-yr table B25119.

³American Community Survey 2010 1-yr table B25064. Gross Median Rent: Obtained from responses to the housing questions on the Census Bureau's American Community survey, gross median rent is the average of all rents and utilities paid by respondents in a given area. While gross median rent is one of the best available statistics on rent amounts, it is far from perfect. For example, it does not account for the number of units in the area and provides no information on bedroom size. These important additional pieces of information are not available through the Census in a usable form because all rental units with a gross rent over \$1,500 are grouped together. For these reasons, if anything, gross rent data underestimate the extent to which the lack of affordable housing affects segregation.

² American Community Survey 2010 1-yr table B25106.

Affordable Housing in a Variety of Locations Promotes Fair Housing Choice

Despite the need throughout the State, the supply of affordable housing is concentrated in just a few communities. Of the municipalities that have not met the 10% affordable threshold in Connecticut's AHAA,³ 98% (136 of 169) are municipalities that are disproportionately non-Hispanic White compared to the state as a whole (i.e. approximately 71% non-Hispanic White).⁴ In contrast, the municipalities that are home to high percentages of people of color, people with disabilities, single parent households, and voucher holders have met or exceeded the 10% threshold.



One of the most cost effective ways to create affordable housing is through the development of multi-family housing. However the development of this type of housing has

³C.G.S. § 8-30g

⁴ Data on race from household population Census 2010 SF2 PCT5.

largely reinforced existing patterns of segregation as many municipalities have not met the thresholds set out in 8-30g. Between 2002 and 2011, although there was a net gain of 25,474 multi-family housing units, the state continued to lose multi-family housing in municipalities that were majority White while adding such housing in municipalities that were majority people of color. Weakening 8-30g will stop or delay the creation of affordable housing outside of Connecticut's urban centers and will increase segregation rather than promote integration.

Strengthen 8-30g, do not weaken it.

The need for housing that is affordable has never been greater. Connecticut has lagged the nation in multi-family construction in recent years, and we were 50th in units built per capita in 2011 and for the 2004-2013 decade. This lack of supply has kept rental prices the 8th highest in the nation while the housing wage, the hourly wage necessary for a family to rent a 2 bedroom apartment has remained among the top 10 in the nation, at \$23.02 per hour. The reasons for which § 8-30g was adopted in 1989-90 are as compelling today as they were then. Weakening it now will stop the important progress that has been made.