



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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RANKING MEMBER
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February 5, 2015

Dear Chairmen, Senator Winfield, Representative Butler and distinguished members of the Housing Committee.

H.B 6128 "AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING LAND USE APPEALS ACT".

That section 8-30g of the general statutes be amended to provide that: (1) Elderly units restricted to persons and families whose income is less than or equal to eighty per cent of the median income shall be awarded one housing unit-equivalent point; (2) affordable housing units constructed prior to July 1, 1990, shall be counted for purposes of meeting the required number of housing unit-equivalent points to qualify for the temporary moratorium; (3) deed-restricted affordable housing units in set-aside developments shall remain deed-restricted in perpetuity; (4) set-aside developments shall be prohibited in all flood zones; and (5) municipalities that (A) have adopted an affordable housing plan, and (B) have demonstrated a commitment to increasing affordable housing stock by establishing incentive housing zones pursuant to chapter 124b of the general statutes shall be eligible for the temporary moratorium.

Suburban towns like the one I represent have become prey to developers who are looking to overbuild in dense communities for a big profit.

Fairfield was a leader in affordable housing before 8-30g was written and passed into law nearly 25 years ago. Fairfield started planning and building a diverse stock of affordable housing options.

Fairfield partnered with religious organizations, the state and federal governments.

A few of Fairfield's Affordable Housing communities include, Berger Building, 26 units, Bishop Curtis Homes, 15 units, Durrell Drive, four, 2 bedroom units, Grasmere Avenue, four, 1 bedroom units, Greenfield Commons, 10 units, Sullivan-McKinney Elder Housing, 40 units and Trefoil Court, 30 units, Pine Tree Lane, 38 units, and Fairfield has Parish Court which is 100 units of affordable housing that was built in the 1970's, all within a mile of my own home and the last three communities aren't allowed to be counted as affordable units in the 8-30g statute because of the arbitrary date of 1990 was inserted into the statute.

Parish Court recently went through a major renovation inside and out. The 100 units are beautiful! Pine Tree has been approved for demolition and complete rebuild, and adding 12 units to the prior 38, bringing the total of 50 units. However, the Department of Housing has stated, only the 12 added units will be allowed to count toward Fairfield's affordable housing number, not the prior 38, even though they're going to be brand new.

Additionally, Parish Courts brand new renovated 100 units are not allowed in the count either. How does this make sense?

1) Remove the 1990 date from when affordable housing units can be counted toward a towns total number. (Many towns have units that were built before 1990 they're not allowed to count toward their total)

Fairfield is also the only suburban town that I know of that built and supported a homeless shelter and food pantry. In the 1980's Fairfield had a First Selectwoman by the name of Jackie Durrell who was a champion for the homeless. Before Jackie, Fairfield had a First Selectman who was also a champion for affordable housing and put in place along with Jackie Durrell the blueprint for affordable housing throughout our community. We have units for seniors, disabled and families. However, instead of being recognized for this effort, Fairfield is being penalized for being progressive and a head of the curve, resulting in many of our affordable units not being counted under the 8-30g statute.

People outside of Fairfield have a belief that every part and every home in my town is expensive and out of reach. It's simply not accurate. I grew up in Fairfield in a modest area and in a modest home. My grandparents raised their 15 children on a small farm, in five room house with no indoor plumbing or electricity. When I got married, my husband and I pulled our money with my brother in law and his wife after renting to buy a duplex in a modest area of Fairfield. We built up equity for years, sold the home and both purchased small Cape Cod style single family homes. Fairfield still has many rental properties and affordable homes.

I'm an advocate for affordable housing, spent many years advocating for people in the 4th congressional district as a staff member for former Congressman Chris Shays, and have been a member of the legislatures Housing committee since 2011. However, I have watched my home town become a target for developers who are not advocates of affordable housing. I believe there are areas of the 8-30g statute that can be amended to increase affordable housing while protecting towns from those who are looking to take advantage.

2) Changing the point count for seniors from a 1/2 point to a full point.

For the life of me, I can't understand why seniors don't count in the 8-30g statute?
Seniors are past their earning potential and many live on fixed incomes. To me, they are the ones most in need of affordable housing especially, community style housing. They have no options to increase their incomes, and CT like the rest of country is facing a baby boom population that is aging and in need of affordable housing options and yet, under 8-30g they only count as a 1/2 a point!

3) Adding to the allowable restriction: wetlands, conservation and floodplain land. Currently public safety is the only allowed denial for towns zoning boards.

Developers are winning in court on 8-30g applications in wetlands, floodplains and conservation areas that have been denied by local zoning boards. If an area isn't suitable to build, it should be included in the statute.

Fairfield has been working for over a year to update its affordable housing plan, and I'm encouraged by the work we've done and will continue to do to offer more affordable housing in my community.

However, the 8-30g statute is outdated and should be amended to take into consideration new information, and close loopholes that benefits developers. I look forward to working with the Chairs and the Committee on drafting reasonable changes.

I appreciate your time and consideration,



Brenda Kupchick
State Representative
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Fairfield and Southport