

**Housing Committee, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Testimony of Hannah Croasmun, Mothers for Justice**  
Good Evening Senator Winfield, Representative Butler, and members of the Housing Committee, My name is Hannah Croasmun and I own a home on Dyer Street in New Haven. I am a social work intern with Mothers for Justice (MFJ), a grassroots advocacy group based in New Haven who are concerned about issues that affect low-income women and their children.

I am here today, along with members of Mothers for Justice, **to strongly oppose the bills that repeal or amend the Affordable Housing Appeals Process (8-30g)**. These bills will severely limit affordable housing choices for low-income households.

- Recent estimates state that there is an over **90,000-unit shortage** in affordable housing for low-income families across the state.<sup>i</sup>
- Studies show that lack of affordable housing options mean that families are forced to **spend more of their limited income on rent**, while forgoing other basic expenses, such as: nutritious food, safe childcare, and proper health care.<sup>ii</sup>

**High housing costs are a significant driver of housing instability and homelessness. If we don't do more to close this affordable housing gap we will be putting more families, including children, in danger of becoming homeless.**

My husband and I are relatively recent graduates of Yale and consciously chose to live in New Haven and raise our child here to take advantage of the racial and socio-economic diversity and vibrancy of the city.

**However, the high cost of living – Connecticut has one of the highest rental costs in the nation – make it hard for young people in general and families just starting out, like ours, to stay in the state.** Several of my college-educated friends who live in New Haven pay more than the recommended 30% of their income on rent. If this is the case for us as young college-educated professionals, imagine how hard it must be for families who are living in poverty in Connecticut.

Through my interactions with the women in Mothers for Justice and with members of my church (I'm also a local pastor here in New Haven), I hear the heart-wrenching stories of families who have to choose between paying their rent or fixing their car (or getting bus passes) so they can go to work, or taking their kids to the doctor when they're sick, or not buying food to eat in some cases. **It seems preposterous for me that we would choose to limit housing choices when we need them more than ever.**

**Mothers for Justice is advocating for an increased number of state Rental Assistance Program (RAP) certificates which will allow more families across the state to have more choice in obtaining safe and affordable housing. Through this and efforts like 8-30g, we allow more families to be able to afford to live and thrive in Connecticut.** We need *both* more affordable housing units all over the state *and* we need more vouchers to make it possible for people to afford to live in the best places for them and their children. **Our most vulnerable populations deserve more housing choice.**

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions.

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<sup>i</sup> Partnership for Strong Communities (PSC). (2013). *Housing in CT 2013*. Retrieved from: [http://www.pschohousing.org/files/PSC\\_HousingInCT2013\\_Final.pdf](http://www.pschohousing.org/files/PSC_HousingInCT2013_Final.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Interagency Council on Affordable Housing (ICAH). (2014). Report of the ICAH. Retrieved from: [http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/hhs/interagency\\_council\\_on\\_affordable\\_housing/meeting\\_2014\\_01-23/interagency\\_council\\_on\\_affordable\\_housing\\_2014\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/hhs/interagency_council_on_affordable_housing/meeting_2014_01-23/interagency_council_on_affordable_housing_2014_final_report.pdf); Lindberg, R. A., Shenassa, E. D., Acevedo-Garcia, D., Popkin, S. J., Villaveces, A., & Morley, R. L. (2010). Housing Interventions at the Neighborhood Level and Health: A Review of the Evidence. *Journal of Public Health Management Practice*, 16(5), S44–S52.

