



Joint Committee on Human Services, February 5, 2015
Testimony of Diana Deng, Partnership for Strong Communities, on HB 5823,
An Act Implementing a State-Wide Coordinated Two-Generational Model

Good afternoon, chairs and members of the Joint Committee on Human Services. My name is Diana Deng, and I'm the Policy and Communications Analyst at the Partnership for Strong Communities, a statewide nonprofit policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ending homelessness and expanding affordable housing to strengthen Connecticut communities. The Partnership staffs two statewide campaigns to end homelessness and expand affordable housing – Reaching Home and HOME Connecticut, respectively. Our leadership in housing policy development, advocacy and research in Connecticut gives us a unique and well-founded perspective on the connections between housing and various policy disciplines, including employment, education, transportation, health care, food security, community development and more.

The Partnership for Strong Communities participates on the state's Two-Generational Policy Workgroup and supports HB 5823, An Act Implementing a State-Wide Coordinated Two Generational Model. We support the interagency approach included in the bill, and believe that the state's Departments of Housing and Education and Office of Early Childhood should be added and play key roles in the development of two-generational pilot approaches.

For many families living in poverty, the lack of stable housing leads to costly cycling through foster care, emergency rooms, emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, detox centers, and jails. By the same token, stable housing provides an ideal launching pad for employment and the delivery of education, job training and other social services focused on improving educational achievement, health and employment. We see the creation of pilot two-generational programs as key to impacting meaningful outcomes for families with children, and we know that housing is critical part of the equation. The Partnership stands ready to offer multiple strategies that include this factor in state pilot models, including but not limited to:

- **Secure Jobs CT Initiative:** a pilot to streamline and target employment services and supports directly to clients of rapid re-housing services (families exiting homelessness)
- **Expansion of rapid re-housing:** intervention designed to help quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing (Three years after, 95% of families did not return to shelter)
- **Multi-family housing** - additional bond financing to maintain affordable housing development rounds with a focus on deeply affordable units, and to leverage private dollars in the Multifamily Bond Initiative program. Connecticut must continue to incentivize development of multi-bedroom affordable units that target low-income families.
- **Higher density housing near transit stations** – incentives are needed to ensure that affordable housing is not developed in isolation; housing, where possible, should provide transit access and, thus, links to jobs, education, training, health care and other services.
- **Incentives and subsidies so housing can be developed in high-resource communities** where schools are not overburdened and services are abundant. Research from Mt. Laurel NJ to Montgomery County MD shows children in high-resource schools raise reading and math scores and parents connect to more and better jobs.

