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**Testimony in Support of House Bill 6461, an Act Concerning the Data Collection and Analysis of Affordable Housing and House Bill 6640, An Act Concerning Allocations of Low Income Housing Tax Credits
February 17, 2015**

Good afternoon Senator Winfield, Representative Butler and distinguished members of the Housing Committee. My name is David McGuire. I am the Staff Attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT) and I'm here to testify in support of House Bill 6461 and House Bill 6640.

The ACLU-CT has serious concerns about housing opportunities available to people in need of subsidized and affordable housing in Connecticut. The Fair Housing Act (FHA) was enacted to prevent housing discrimination and ensure diverse housing options for every American. For many years the ACLU-CT has used civil rights laws to increase housing options for low income minority families outside of high poverty communities. Our organization has successfully challenged discriminatory government policies on site selection, tenant relocation, Housing Choice Voucher administration, tenant selection, and exclusionary suburban housing and zoning policies.

As members of the Housing Committee you are all aware that multiple agencies and departments provide housing to Connecticut residents. There is no central source from which to assess comprehensive data on who is receiving housing, what kind of housing is provided or available, where housing is available, or even who is paying for subsidized housing. House Bill 6461 is essential because a lack of complete low income housing data makes it impossible for the government, residents and watchdog groups to determine FHA compliance. In order to truly assess if Connecticut is meeting its obligations to its citizens, data must be collected and made accessible to potential tenants, developers and housing advocates. Although residents have the right not to share certain information such as their race or ethnicity or certain medical information if they so choose not to, it is essential for Connecticut agencies to collect and analyze this data. For these reasons we urge you to support House Bill 6461.

The troubling practice of continued development of low income housing in deeply segregated, high poverty Connecticut communities is evident from what little data is available currently. This harmful and discriminatory development trend is fueled by Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs). LIHTCs are perpetuating racially and economically segregated communities by confining people to non-diverse, low opportunity communities. This system flies in the face of the FHA's guarantee of fair housing. House Bill 6640 would encourage the development of affordable and mixed housing in high opportunity areas, thereby creating sorely needed diverse communities in Connecticut. Please support this bill.

Encouraging racial and economic integration is good public policy which will provide equal opportunity for more people in Connecticut. For these reasons above, we urge your support of House Bill 6461 and House Bill 6640. Thank you for your consideration.