



# Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

*A Nonpartisan Public Policy and Research Office of the Connecticut General Assembly*

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## Testimony of Julia Evans Starr Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

### The Housing Committee

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Julia Evans Starr  
Executive Director

Senators Winfield and Osten, Representatives Butler and Rose, and esteemed members of the Housing Committee, my name is Julia Evans Starr, and I am Executive Director for Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging. I thank you for this opportunity to comment on the bill before you today regarding the Affordable Housing Land Using Appeals Procedure (the appeals procedure), codified in Section 8-30g of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Deb Mignasault  
Senior Policy Analyst

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Project Manager

As you know, Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging is the nonpartisan, public policy and research office of the General Assembly. It has been an effective statewide leader in improving the quality of life for older adults and persons with disabilities for 22 years. With just 4 employees and 21 volunteer members from across the state, we shape innovative public policies, promote government accountability, establish diverse partnerships and coalitions, and analyze demographic trends to prepare Connecticut for a growing older adult population.

Christianne Kovel  
Communications  
Specialist

*With 21 volunteer  
board members from  
across the state*

### **Comments on Raised Bill No. 5363: An Act Concerning the Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Procedure**

As you know, the appeals procedure has spurred the creation of thousands of units of affordable housing since its adoption in 1989. The need for these units in Connecticut is more salient than ever before, where 35% of home owners and 50% of renters spent at least 30% of their household income on housing. For Connecticut residents age 65 and older, these number rise slightly to 40% of home owners and 53% of renters.<sup>1</sup> That is, the need for affordable housing in Connecticut continues to surpass the available supply.

Rising housing and health care costs, difficulties reentering the workforce and diminished opportunities for saving as people live longer—and often with multiple chronic conditions—can create significant economic hardship for Connecticut's older adults. Accordingly, expanding housing opportunities for older adults in Connecticut is critical, especially as we continue to find through our work that older adults overwhelmingly want to age in place, in familiar home and neighborhood environments.

<sup>1</sup> US Census, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



Of equal importance are the housing needs of the myriad of professionals necessary to support older adults and persons with disabilities. This critical workforce may also need affordable housing. And more generally, creating affordable housing for all Connecticut residents is also necessary to create economically vibrant, diverse communities that enhance opportunity for intergenerational connectivity. In short, successful aging in place demands growing Connecticut's affordable housing for people of all ages, and in every Connecticut town.

The location of housing must also be considered in designing aging-supportive communities. Increasingly, communities are embracing Smart Growth, a set of planning principles that promote more compact, walkable, mixed-use, mixed income, environmentally sensitive communities with a range of transportation and housing choice. Demand is not only coming from older adult, but from individuals across the lifespan.

With these concepts in mind, Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging offers the following comments on Raised Bill 5363:

- We are concerned about the proposed portion of Section (k)(1), potentially stifling affordable housing creation, by making the appeals procedure unavailable if the proposed development contains less than four affordable dwelling units. In many cases, towns in Connecticut most in need of creating additional affordable housing choices are best-suited to small-scale development.
- We support the portion in Section (l)(6) that awards additional points to units that contain at least 3 bedrooms, where the available data demonstrate the most significant disconnect between housing need and affordable housing supply, especially in areas of opportunity. We also support awarding additional points for development in incentive housing zones, which places housing in locations consistent with principles of Smart Growth development.
- With respect to the portion of Section (l)(6) that awards additional points for elderly units in a project with at least 60% of the restricted units designated as family units, we appreciate the need to expand affordable housing options for older adults. But we embrace those that supplement, not supplant exist efforts to create more affordable housing opportunities across the lifespan.
- We support revision to the incentive housing zone statute to ensure that the language defining median income in a way that optimizes and aligns incentive housing zone requirements with the requirements in the appeals procedure.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide comment today on these bills.