



CONNECTICUT COALITION TO
END HOMELESSNESS

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**Testimony of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness
Regarding SB155, HB5363
Housing Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
March 1, 2016**

Rep. Butler, Sen. Winfield, Rep. Kupchick, Sen. Hwang,

Thank you for hearing my testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH). I am proud to speak before you today, representing more than 75 member agencies across the state of Connecticut working to provide shelter and end homelessness for our neighbors in need. I am testifying in regards to SB 155 and HB 5363.

First, I would like to offer our thoughts on SB 155, "An Act Concerning the Allocation of Low Income Housing Tax Credits." Increasing the stock of affordable housing in Connecticut's high resource communities is an important goal. Developing more affordable housing choices in a wider array of our towns is essential to Connecticut's future economic growth, to ending poverty and to closing the achievement gap. Even as we advance the important goal of ending homelessness in our state, we know that far too many of our residents – those who have previously experienced homelessness and those who struggle to maintain adequate housing for themselves and their families – are often severely burdened by the high costs of housing in much of our state.

However, SB 155 may undermine the ability of the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority to implement this important program to maximal effect. We would propose that the LIHTC QAP process, which includes public review and feedback, may be the more appropriate vehicle to further explore how LIHTC funds are prioritized. Developing a comprehensive strategy for using the various financing and incentive tools available in Connecticut, including Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), engaging a wide range of stakeholders to do so, offers a productive path forward for discussions of this important area of work.

One of the most important strategies in expanding housing opportunities to high resource communities is continuing to engage with municipalities to revise their zoning to invite affordable, multifamily development. Integrating affordable housing into a town's course of business, including revisions to zoning codes, is imperative. Without zoning that allows developers to identify parcels and have confidence that their project will move forward in a timely manner, the proposals that SB 155 envisions cannot happen. This is particularly true for LIHTC projects, as the program's cost structure doesn't necessarily make it well-

suited for the smaller projects that may be more feasible in high resource, suburban communities. In our work to develop Coordinated Access to homeless resources in each community across the state, we have been engaging with local leadership to help address local challenges to ending homelessness and to leverage local assets that can help with this work. We find, with regard to homelessness, that working community-by-community with locally elected officials and community leaders is an important part of this effort.

LIHTC is a tool used to help achieve many of the state's affordable housing goals, including the preservation of public housing, the revitalization of the state's urban areas, the realization of transit-oriented development projects, and the development of supportive housing for those experiencing homelessness. These priorities must be balanced alongside the goal of expanding affordable housing in high resource communities, and may overlap in many instances.

For these various reasons, we feel that more engagement with the various stakeholders impacted by the changes proposed in SB 155 would be prudent.

Second, I would like to stress CCEH's support for the state's Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Process, commonly referred to as 8-30g. We oppose any weakening of the statute, which has successfully created thousands of affordable homes throughout the state. While the changes outlined in HB 5363 do not call for a complete repeal, they would weaken some key provisions.

We respectfully submit that 8-30g has been effective and remains vital. Many of the affordable units built using 8-30g have been created without state or federal housing subsidies. Further, 8-30g incentivizes municipalities to work toward creating affordable housing and has led many to embrace the Housing for Economic Growth/ Incentive Housing Zone program to proactively create the affordable housing they need. We would like to highlight the moratorium provisions within 8-30g, which provide a way for towns to achieve respite from 8-30g without having to reach the 10% threshold. There are several communities that have qualified for a moratorium under the statute. Berlin, Ridgefield, and Wilton have active moratoria currently; Darien and Trumbull have achieved moratoria in the past. Other towns, such as Farmington, are actively working towards this goal.

Respectfully,

Lisa Tepper Bates
Executive Director
Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness