



**Testimony for Housing Committee Hearing
March 1, 2016**

**Presented by Richard Porth on HB5363
An Act Concerning the Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Procedure**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB5363, An Act Concerning the Affordable Housing Land use Appeals Procedure. United Way's Policy Agenda calls for increasing the supply of affordable housing in Connecticut. In keeping with this position, United Way is opposed to these recommendations which would weaken Connecticut's affordable housing law – Section 8-30g of the general statutes.

My name is Richard Porth and I serve as CEO of United Way of Connecticut. United Ways in Connecticut released a report on financial hardship for hard working people who still struggle to make ends meet – known as ALICE – Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed. The ALICE Report documents over 276,000 renters in Connecticut with income below the ALICE Household Survival Budget – which quantifies the costs of the five basic essentials of housing, child care, food, health care, and transportation (2012 ACS data). Yet, the report also indicates that only 175,000 rental units in our state (as of 2013) are affordable to ALICE households and other households below the poverty line. Clearly, there isn't enough affordable housing for ALICE and other families in our state.

We recently disseminated an ALICE Update focused on the cost of housing and its impact on Connecticut families (<http://alice.ctunitedway.org/housing>). The ALICE Housing Update notes that half of all renters and more than a third of all homeowners in Connecticut are spending more than 30% of their income on housing, which is the amount above which housing costs typically become a real burden on household budgets (according to various national sources). When households are overburdened by housing costs, they are faced with making tough

choices, including living in substandard housing, foregoing necessary medical care or healthier food, and even falling into homelessness.

Every day people across Connecticut call 2-1-1 to ask for help with housing problems. In fact, housing-related concerns, including homelessness, represent the #1 service request at 2-1-1. This is the result in large part of Connecticut's comparatively high housing costs. As the Partnership for Strong Communities documents in its "Housing in Connecticut 2015" report, Connecticut is 6th in national ranking of median monthly housing costs.

Thanks to state leadership and significant investment in affordable housing, 7,500 new affordable housing units have been created since 2011. We applaud the state for this. But there is still significant need for affordable housing choices in more different locations. Weakening the Section 8-30g affordable housing statute would undermine further progress in this crucial investment in Connecticut's vitality.

Thank you.