



Testimony on H.B.7297, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION IN THE DUTY TO PROMOTE FAIR HOUSING AND REQUIRING A STUDY OF CONNECTICUT'S HOUSING INVENTORY AND CURRENT AND FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS

Planning and Development Committee

March 22, 2017

Good afternoon Senator Cassano, Senator Logan, Representative Lemar, Representative Zawistowski and distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee.

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region with a mission to put philanthropy into action to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region. We are the largest community foundation in Connecticut, and among the largest 20 community foundations in the country.

The Hartford Foundation supports provisions of S.B. 752, An Act Concerning Housing Segregation, that seek to have the state analyze “the gap between the state-wide housing inventory and the state's current housing needs and projected housing needs.” Connecticut has been a leader in housing and in the use of data, but there is a conspicuous gap in the availability of detailed data on housing, which inhibits planning and action at the local, regional and state levels.

At the Hartford Foundation, we believe that data and research help us to better understand and serve the community. That’s why the Foundation launched its Community Indicators Project in 2013 to identify and build understanding about the issues and opportunities facing the Greater Hartford region (<http://www.hfpg.org/our-approach/community-indicators/>). This work includes publication of the Metro Hartford Progress Points report by a group of regional stakeholders to provide a periodic 'check-up' about issues facing the Greater Hartford community.

In our 2015 report, we highlighted data on the high degree of racial and economic segregation in the metro Hartford region. According to the analysis of access to opportunity in that report:

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- 47% of the region's labor force live in high or very high opportunity neighborhoods.
- 31% of children under age 5 in our region live in very low opportunity neighborhoods, more than in any other type of community.
- 53% of people of color in our region live in very low opportunity neighborhoods.

At the same time, of the 4,000 units of affordable housing created in the Hartford region from 2009 to 2014, 47% were located in the cities of Hartford and New Britain, almost as many were added in the other 36 towns in our region combined.

Why does this matter? Research shows that housing can be a bridge to opportunity for the people and places in greatest need. In 2016, we hosted a discussion by Robert D. Putnam, Malkin Professor of Public Policy at Harvard and author of 'Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis.' Based on Dr. Putnam's research, a non-partisan working group (the Saguaro Seminar) recommended 'more mixed-income housing through housing vouchers, plus counseling' as a way to reduce economic segregation.

Yet today, in the state of Connecticut, we lack detailed data on just these types of proven interventions, inhibiting not only policymakers, but also funders and nonprofits. Much of this data is already collected but it is not consolidated and published in a manner with sufficient detail to readily inform planning and analysis at the local and regional level. We believe publishing data on current and projected future housing needs is an important first step for investments that have been shown to have positive impact.

Connecticut has been a pioneer in open data, through the State's Open Data Portal and has many other high-quality data providers and research groups. In 2014, the Hartford Foundation commissioned an assessment of resources for data in our region, which concluded that 'data intermediary functions exist and are being performed across multiple organizations in the region,' including through the Connecticut Data Collaborative, DataHaven and the State Data Center at the University of Connecticut. Connecticut has the expertise to help close this gap in data and we support the provisions in the bill that seek to provide high-quality data to support local and regional planning.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Elysa Gordon at 860-548-1888 or EGordon@hfpg.org