

Testimony of Wendy Smith in Support of H.B. 7297
Before the Planning & Development Committee of the Connecticut Legislature
Wednesday, March 22, 2017

Thank you for accepting this written statement in support of H.B. 7297. My name is Wendy Smith. I have spent 32 of my 43 years living in Connecticut. I grew up in Mystic, attended Dartmouth College, returned to worked for Pfizer in Groton and then Choate in Wallingford, left for graduate school at MIT, worked for five years at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and finally returned ten years ago to settle and raise a family in Glastonbury. I am currently a clean energy consultant.

Although Connecticut suburbia seems a little more diverse than it did 40 years ago, it has not changed much. H.B. 7297 is an important bill for our state. Unfair policies segregated our state racially and economically. It is obvious to all Connecticut residents that people of color are concentrated in the most distressed areas in the state. The legacy of white privilege created this disparity. Research shows that where you live strongly influences your chance of success and your health. All Connecticut children deserve to start with the same chances. We can do more to undo past (and current) unfair housing practices by offering more affordable housing choices in towns like Glastonbury. The measures proposed in H.B. 7297 will help create more affordable housing in towns with more opportunity, like mine.

I was the first woman in my family to go to college, and my father was the first person. After college, he moved out of the city, away from our extended family. Part of my success in high school to get into a good college was due to where we lived. I would probably not have had the same opportunity growing up in Norwich, where my parents were raised. I am delighted to be able to give my children more advantages than I had growing up, but I am distressed at the lack of diversity in Glastonbury. We chose Glastonbury because of the good school system, but in doing so, we unintentionally chose less racial and economic diversity for our children. I hope Connecticut chooses to do more to give more children born into more difficult financial circumstances the same school system and community my family enjoys, while making sure to promote diverse communities – both racially and economically.