Bill No.: SB-1070  
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING ABANDONED AND BLIGHTED PROPERTY CONSERVATORSHIP.  
Vote Date: 3/29/2019  
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute  
PH Date: 3/18/2019  
File No.:  

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SPONSORS OF BILL:  
Introduced by:  
Planning and Development Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:  
The state of Connecticut is suffering from an abundance of homes that have been abandoned or blighted (unsafe, uninhabitable, and not being worked upon), which is creating a situation throughout the state of lowered property values, danger because of unsafe buildings, and financial burdens upon municipalities that cannot gain property taxes from the residence. SB 1070 would enable municipalities to have court appointed conservators to bring residential, commercial, and industrial buildings that fall under categorically unsafe and uninhabitable standards and have been petitioned by the court by defined interested parties to municipal code compliance (standards on which the municipality has agreed upon regarding how to purchase/repair/treat abandoned property).

Substitute Language LCO #6693 does some very minor technical changes to the bill, changing conservatorship and conservator to stewardship and steward respectively, and pushes the start date of action for the bill to January of 2020.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:  
State of Connecticut Judicial Branch: The judicial branch asks that if the bill is passed, that the implementation date be January 1, 2020, because it will take time to create case types that follow and monitor the affected properties and schedule the cases in an orderly fashion.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:  
Luke Bronin| Mayor of Hartford: Mayor Bronin states that his support for SB 1070 stems from the need for improvement in several CT communities suffering from the problem of blighted and abandoned property. He highlights that the lower property values and less tax
revenue are issues in and of themselves, but that the procedural issue lies in how long it takes for municipalities to be able to foreclose abandoned properties and get the properties back in proper condition. He states that the bill will allow for more fluid and fair processes for the town and for the owner.

**Kiley Gosselin| Executive Director of Partnership for Stronger Communities:** Ms. Gosselin states that her support of the bill is based upon the anecdotal evidence of the effectiveness of conservatorship throughout the country in combatting blighted property and the issues that it brings to communities. She states that the usage of conservators can allow for two great community gains: the elimination of blighted and unsightly property, and low-cost housing in the community, if the land is used by the municipality for community gain.

**Rosanne Haggerty| CEO of Community Solutions:** Ms. Haggerty supports SB 1070 as one of the main necessities for her company’s success. Community Solutions is a North Hartford based nonprofit company seeking to end homelessness in nearby communities and the causes behind it. She states that the reason behind such pervasive blight throughout urban neighborhoods is out of state speculators purchasing blighted property and not repairing it in order to cash in once the resurgence of Hartford leads to massive increase in property value. However, she reasons, delaying fixing the blighted property leads to higher rates of negative mental and physical health detriments, along with lowered property values that lead to increased financial strains on poorer residents. SB 1070 would allow for residents of blighted communities to report blighted properties and then the government would take a step in ensuring that the owner of the property rehabilitates the property.

**David Foster| CEO of Bastogne Development Partners:** Mr. Foster supports SB 1070 because it is a key component to enabling the work that he and his company do. BDP works in conjunction with communities that are affected by blight to rehabilitate and provide community relief to municipalities and neighborhoods affected by such incidents, using the Pennsylvania model of conservatorship, where neighbors or community residents can report blighted property and a process of property rehabilitation commences. Mr. Foster states that SB 1070 would allow for communities like North Hartford to take back control of themselves and eliminate blighted property through fair and speedy remediation processes.

**James Berardino| Lobbyist for Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST):** Mr. Berardino supports SB 1070 because it would assist small towns in getting rid of unsightly and blighted properties that lower their community’s property value and safety.

**Donna Hamzy Caroccia| Advocacy Manager for the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities**

CCM supports SB 1070 because of the need for municipalities to have access to the tools necessary to “combat substandard, deteriorating, and abandoned residential, commercial, and industrial structures as they present a public safety threat and nuisance within our communities”.

**Jim Horan| Executive Director of Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)**

Mr. Horan supports the passage of SB 1070 because the bill will allow for municipalities to grant conservators the power to bring blighted properties back to the municipal gain, and LISC’s goal is to empower communities by providing relief and assistance in programs that seek to improve community betterment, which necessitates the rehabilitation of unsafe and unsightly properties in local communities.
Jane Montanaro| Executive Director of CT Trust for Historic Preservation
Ms. Montanaro states that her support for SB 1070 is more based in the protection of historic and older properties. Because of the history of CT being one of the first states within the USA, many of the properties affected by blight are older or historic properties, and thus have an emphasized need to be worked upon and rehabilitated. Ms. Montanaro emphasizes that because SB 1070 provides safety and security for the ownership of the property to remain in the hands of the owner, the bill language should be agreeable to those wishing to combat the problem of blight.

Jim Perras| CEO of Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Connecticut
Mr. Perras throws his support behind the bill because of the problems that the remodelers of Connecticut have had with dealing with blighted property and the responsibility of the owners for rehabilitating their property. Mr. Perras reminds that foreclosure processes are very expensive and can be long/drawn out, and SB 1070 provides an option that is fluid, fair and rapid.

Donna and Thomas Swarr| Residents of Hartford
Mr. and Ms. Swarr are in support of SB 1070 as residents of Hartford in a neighborhood with blighted properties. They attest that their property is being lowered because of the unsightly homes, and they have had to suffer from waste being dumped in the vicinity because of absent landowners, along with vermin and other issues coming from the blighted homes near them. They attest to the fact that the foreclosure process is a very slow one, and it oftentimes takes a very long time to even get the municipality to declare a location blighted without a petition being formed first.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:
Connecticut Bankers Association:
The CBA is against SB 1070 because of the new process it would introduce to CT homeowners, lenders, and municipalities. The CBA argues that the passage of another Planning and Development bill, HB 7277, AAC The Creation of Land Bank Authorities, is the more effective route and SB 1070 should therefore not be introduced.