



Testimony on House Bill 5273

Good afternoon distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee. My name is Isabel Blank. I am Manager, External Affairs at the Yankee Institute for Public Policy, and I am writing to testify in opposition of House Bill 5273, An Act Concerning as of Right Multifamily Homes. For questions or follow up, please contact me at isabel@yankeeinstitute.org.

Unfortunately, this room is familiar with bills like the one before you today. In 2015 Governor Malloy proposed similar legislation to create the Transit Corridor Development Authority, which would have been able to borrow money and seize property through eminent domain within a mile of present and future transit stations. In the 2017 budget, Malloy again attempted to establish a new state municipal authority with the power to condemn and seize private property and borrow money to meet its goal of “stimulating” transit-oriented development, housing development, and “creating vibrant, multi-dimensional downtowns.”

Thankfully, both of those efforts ultimately failed.

Although House Bill 5273 does not explicitly establish any new authorities like its predecessors, it raises the same concerns surrounding eminent domain and the bypassing of municipal law, all without an appeals process.

Just as individuals are best equipped to make decisions for themselves and their family, municipalities are better equipped than the state to make the right decisions for themselves; only they truly know their own needs.

Each municipality has crafted its laws to match their own needs, and they have the right to plan their town as they see fit. Withdrawing random patches of property from municipal control will upset local zoning planning and careful community development plans.

Furthermore, the state would create a terrible precedent by asserting itself over huge portions of small towns, circumventing municipal law by forcing zoning changes, and taking away discretion of municipalities. This not only cedes municipal zoning rights to the state but opens the door to even more cession. If the state begins overriding zoning laws, it will soon be tempted to intervene directly in municipal government more regularly, entirely undermining the division of responsibility and focus that the state has historically relied on.

We must protect the autonomy municipalities still have so that they can best serve their residents and protect them from state overreach.

For these reasons, I urge you to oppose this bill.