



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSING COMMITTEE

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FEBRUARY 18, 2020**

Testimony on

- S.B. NO. 105 – AN ACT ESTABLISHING A RIGHT TO HOUSING**
- S.B. NO. 109 – AN ACT CONCERNING A LANDLORD’S ABILITY TO CONSIDER THE CRIMINAL RECORD OF PROSPECTIVE TENANTS**
- S.B. NO. 110 – AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING AUTHORITY JURISDICTION**
- H.B. NO. 5122 – AN ACT CONSIDERING CONSIDERATION OF CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS OF A PROSPECTIVE TENANT**
- H.B. NO. 5124 – AN ACT REQUIRING LANDLORDS TO NOTIFY TENANTS OF FORECLOSURE PROCEEDINGS**
- H.B. NO. 5125 - AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPARENCY OF RENTAL RATES FOR TENANTS RECEIVING RENTAL ASSISTANCE**
- H.B. NO. 5127 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE’S LONG-TERM AND SHORT-TERM PLANNING CONCERNING HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**
- H.B. NO. 5128 - AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO STATUTES REGARDING BONDFINANCED STATE HOUSING PROGRAMS**
- H.B. NO. 5129 – AN ACT CONCERNING A TRANSITION PROGRAM FOR INCARCERATED PERSONS BEING RELEASED FROM PRISON**

Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, honorable ranking members and members of the committee, my name is Kiley Gosselin. I am the Executive Director at the Partnership for Strong Communities – a statewide nonprofit policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ending homelessness, expanding the creation of affordable housing, and building strong communities in Connecticut.

SB 105: Right to Housing

We support the overall goal of **Senate Bill No. 105** and agree that **all Connecticut residents deserve a safe, stable place to call home.** The Partnership for Strong Communities staffs and manages the



statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut as well as Home Connecticut, the campaign to expand housing opportunity. The vision of the Reaching Home Campaign and Home Connecticut is that no one should experience homelessness, or be without a safe, stable place to call home.

While we support the vision this bill espouses, we are concerned, that as currently drafted, this bill establishes a right to shelter. The right to shelter concept has proven notoriously problematic in Massachusetts and New York City. The policy has had the unintended consequence of shifting scarce funding to cover emergency housing resources including shelters and motels in order to meet the right to shelter requirements, while sacrificing funding for permanent housing solutions. The end result has been an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness and households languishing in temporary emergency housing indefinitely.

We are supportive of the three approaches identified in the bill for prevention of homelessness including payment of rent and utility arrearages, legal support for residents facing eviction and connection to services that would address factors that may lead to homelessness. These resources will be most effective, however, if they are focused on targeted populations who are at risk of homelessness versus broad eligibility.

Overall, the bill is clearly well-intentioned and we look forward to working with members of the Committee with the goal of providing safe, stable homes to all residents.

SB 110: Public Housing Authority Jurisdiction Expansion

Senate Bill No. 110 will allow public housing authorities the discretion to expand their jurisdiction to provide their residents housing options in high and very high opportunity communities. **We support policies, like this bill, that increase housing choice and mobility for residents, as well expand access to jobs, a diversity of neighborhoods, and schools.** Most housing authority residents are people of color that live in areas of concentrated poverty. Increasing community choice for housing authority program participants is a positive step toward increasing the racial and economic diversity of Connecticut's municipalities.

SB 109 and HB 5122: Criminal Records of Prospective Tenants

We support the overall goals of Senate Bill No. 109 and House Bill No. 5122 to limit the consideration of a prospective tenant's criminal convictions. We support efforts to ease barriers to safe, stable housing for people exiting the criminal justice system. Multiple data analyses have shown that the number of people who experience homelessness who have also touched the criminal justice system nears 50%. Moreover, people of color are disproportionately convicted of criminal offenses, and thus disproportionately face additional barriers to housing upon exiting the criminal justice system. Policies to ease those barriers are positive steps in the right direction and could lead to a decrease in homelessness and housing instability for this vulnerable population.



HB 5124: Tenant Notification of Foreclosure Proceedings

We support House Bill No. 5124, An Act Requiring Landlords to Notify Tenants of Foreclosure Proceedings. Low-income tenants are disproportionately affected when their housing is subject to foreclosure proceedings. We support policies, like this bill, that protect low-income residents from housing instability and homelessness.

HB 5125: Transparency of Rental Rates for Tenants Receiving Rental Assistance

We support House Bill No. 5125. Providing low-income households with basic information about the maximum allowable rents by unit allows those households to more quickly and better identify units that meet their own needs within the restrictions of their voucher. This will reduce the likelihood that households are unable to use a voucher within the time limits provided by the housing authority, risking loss of that voucher.

HB 5127: Long-Term and Short-Term Planning

We support efforts to affirmatively further fair housing. House Bill No. 5127 will require the state's consolidated plan for housing and community development to include the collection and analysis of data assessing the state's efforts to affirmatively further fair housing, as well as align the state's numerical housing development goals for affirmatively furthering fair housing with existing federal law. This data is critical to identifying barriers to housing choice and, ultimately, reducing segregation and promoting inclusivity. The state must be able to accurately assess current housing supply and demand, predict future trends, and evaluate the successes of various interventions.

HB 5128: Revisions to Administrative Expense Uses for HPRF

We support House Bill No. 5128 that allows for the redefinition of "administrative expense" for purposes of certain bond-financed state housing programs and to make minor revisions to the statute concerning the homelessness prevention response fund.

HB 5129: Transition for Incarcerated Persons

We are in support of the goal of House Bill No. 5129, in particular the planning for housing 6 months prior to release and mental health assessment. However, we believe that this bill as written, in providing access and reference to the United Way of Connecticut 2-1-1 Infoline program for assistance with obtaining housing, may result in incarcerated persons being discharged directly into the emergency crisis response system. Additionally, this provision encourages reliance on that emergency system to perform housing planning that should, with that 6-month window, be managed prior to exiting the Department of Corrections system. We believe resources at the Department of Corrections should be used to properly plan for discharge into permanent housing options to prevent people from exiting the system into homelessness. Further, we support more resources be allocated to support FUSE, also known as Connecticut Collaborative on Reentry (CCR),



which specifically provides affordable housing units combined with supportive services for high need individuals exiting the criminal justice system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

