



**TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT FAIR HOUSING CENTER
IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 108, S.B. 110, H.B. 5125, H.B. 5127**

My name is Erin Kemple. I am the Executive Director at the Connecticut Fair Housing Center (“the Center”), a statewide organization whose mission is to ensure that all Connecticut residents have access to the housing of their choice. The Center supports S.B 108, S.B. 110, H.B. 5125, and H.B 5127.

For more than 25 years, the Center has been representing people harmed by housing discrimination and working to promote integration. To this day, Connecticut remains highly segregated with 67% of the State’s population of color residing in just 8% of its municipalities. The causes of the State’s segregation problems have been addressed in recent scholarship including Professor Richard Rothstein’s “The Color of Law” which carefully documents the intentional government policies that created our segregated society. It has also been addressed in a series of articles which have appeared in the Connecticut Mirror under the title “Separated by Design.”¹ But it is important to note that this problem only seems intractable. Just as choices in the past created segregation our choices now can remedy it. S.B. 108 is a sensible step in that direction. By allocating rental assistance certificates to families living in racially concentrated high poverty areas who have elected to pursue educational opportunities for their children in the choice program the State of Connecticut can guarantee meaningful housing choice for these families.

¹<https://ctmirror.org/2020/01/09/separated-by-design-how-wealthy-towns-keep-people-with-housing-vouchers-out/>

S.B. 110, An Act Concerning Housing Authority Jurisdiction also promotes integration by erasing the lines which keep people who live in one community from moving to another. In Connecticut, housing authority jurisdiction is typically defined by town borders. This unnecessarily restricts choices for families. For example, housing authorities have limited ability to administer the tenant-based Housing Choice Voucher program or participate in the development of certain types of physical housing units outside of their municipal jurisdiction. These restrictions make it difficult for housing authorities to provide their clients with true housing choice, including the option to live in areas that have good educational outcomes, employment access, as well as low crime rates, and more. The Center is also aware that there is interest in Connecticut to pursue expanded jurisdiction and regionalization of housing authorities, and there is early planning taking place to assist with this effort. To ensure that people who are low-income and dependent on a housing authority for affordable housing can move to the community of their choice, we support this bill.

S.B. 5125, An Act Concerning Transparency of Rental Rates for Tenants Receiving Rental Assistance is a bill which helps people with housing vouchers know and understand the rents which will be paid under the program. Too often, the Center hears from voucher holders that they would like to move to another community but do not know the fair market rent in effect there. This prevents many people from moving to a location with high performing schools, or communities where their jobs are located, or places with access to fresh food and safe outdoor spaces. Mobility for all voucher holders will be improved by requiring each housing authority and nonprofit administering a housing choice voucher program to post the fair market rents for their area on-line and in their offices.

The Center supports H.B. 5127, Act Concerning the State's Long-Term and Short-Term Planning Concerning Housing Development. This bill also helps promote integration by ensuring that the State has accurate data on who is living in its communities which will allow it to better plan to affirmatively further fair housing. The state has committed to consciously work to reverse decades of government programs that intentionally segregated us by race and ethnicity. To fulfill this obligation, the state must analyze current barriers to housing choice, develop a plan to remove those obstacles, and regularly report on its progress toward reducing segregation and promoting inclusivity. Connecticut is already obligated to collect much of the raw data needed to meaningfully plan for fair housing. But these requirements have created overlaps and gaps and are missing key data about demographics and the type of housing available. As a result, truly usable data are not available to the public. By reconceiving these existing commitments, Connecticut can develop a results-based approach to fair housing data collection without imposing significant new requirements for state agencies. Therefore, we support H.B. 5127.