

**Testimony Supporting**  
**HB 6570: An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Development and Municipal Zoning**  
Committee on Transportation  
March 8, 2021

Dear Representative Lemar, Senator Haskell, Representative Simms, Senator Somers, Representative Carney, and esteemed members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Erin Sheehan, and I am testifying today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that one day Connecticut is a thriving and equitable state where all children achieve their full potential.

**Connecticut Voices for Children supports HB 6570: An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Development and Municipal Zoning.** Supporting higher-density housing near bus rapid transit stations and passenger railroad stations will increase housing diversity and affordability, support Connecticut's economy, and make the state a more attractive place to live.

This bill would require 50 percent of the area within a one-half mile radius of CTfastrak stations (Connecticut's bus rapid transit) and passenger railroad stations to be zoned to allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) by-right and to allow for residential buildings containing at least four dwelling units and mixed-use buildings. Under this legislation, just one-half of a percent of land in the state would be affected.<sup>1</sup>

Passage of this bill will increase housing diversity and affordability. Currently, Connecticut is facing an affordable housing crisis. As of 2020, 49 percent of renters statewide spend more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing, a benchmark conventionally used to indicate that a tenant is cost-burdened. Just over 50 percent of those renters spend more than 50 percent of their monthly income on housing, indicating a severe cost-burden.<sup>2</sup> Transit-oriented development is an important component to addressing this challenge—multi-family housing, ADUs, and mixed-use residences are generally smaller and more affordable. Because this proposal specifically excludes parking requirements from these developments, homes and businesses can be constructed with less parking, reducing the overall cost of development even further.<sup>3</sup>

Transit-oriented development also supports the economy. The construction of 100 affordable housing units creates 120 jobs.<sup>4</sup> And the ripple effect from residents living in new units can support as many as 30 new jobs in a wide array of industries.<sup>5</sup> What is more, the creation of new, market-rate housing is

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<sup>1</sup> Desegregate Connecticut. (n.d.). Unlocking Transit-Oriented Development. Retrieved from <https://www.desegregatect.org/tod>

<sup>2</sup> Partnership for Strong Communities. (2020). Housing Data Profiles. Retrieved from <https://housingprofiles.pschohousing.org/compare#Connecticut>

<sup>3</sup> Transit-Oriented Development Toolkit for CT [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/rpa-org/pdfs/TOD-Toolkit-for-Connecticut.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Cohen, R. & Wardrip, K. (2011). The Economic and Fiscal Benefits of Affordable Housing [PDF file]. *Planning Commissioners Journal*. Retrieved from <https://plannersweb.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/501.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

proven to aid in driving down housing costs across municipalities. This is particularly important for renters at or just below the AMI.<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, transit oriented development will support Connecticut's transportation infrastructure. When housing is built in close proximity to transit, it can provide a reliable source of regular transit riders,<sup>7</sup> supporting the financing and long-term viability of Connecticut's public transportation. Research in California found that nearly 20 percent of those who lived within a half-mile to transit used it to travel to work, compared with less than nine percent of those living more than a half-mile from transit.<sup>8</sup> Transit-oriented development can also reduce traffic congestion and slow the crumbling of Connecticut's main transportation routes.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, transit-oriented development will make the state a more attractive place to live. The kinds of communities supported by transit—walkable, mixed-used neighborhoods that include housing, shops, and services—are popular among young professionals and empty-nesters.<sup>10</sup> Homes in close-proximity to transit have more resilient property values in the face of economic downturns,<sup>11</sup> individuals living near transportation have better access to jobs,<sup>12</sup> and access to transit can lower average monthly costs. Households that use public transportation instead of driving can save nearly \$10,000 annually.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, research suggests that transit oriented development has, at best, a positive impact on property values in surrounding neighborhoods, and, at worst, a neutral effect.<sup>14</sup>

We specifically applaud the inclusion of ADUs by right in this bill. Allowing for ADUs by-right in specific zones is good for all Connecticut residents. ADUs can help lower- and moderate-income families generate income and wealth. Homeowners who rent out an ADU can rely on monthly rental income. The addition of an ADU can also increase the total property value of a lot, helping homeowners build wealth.<sup>15</sup> ADUs also benefit seniors, providing them the ability to age in place, age with family

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<sup>6</sup> Mast, E. (2019, July 1). The Effect of New Market-Rate Housing Construction on the Low-Income Housing Market [PDF file]. *W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research*. Retrieved from [https://research.upjohn.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1325&context=up\\_workingpapers](https://research.upjohn.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1325&context=up_workingpapers)

<sup>7</sup> Center for Transit Oriented Development. (2007, April). Realizing the Potential: Expanding Housing Opportunities Near Transit [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://ctod.org/pdfs/2007RealizingPotential.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Transportation Research Board. (2004, January). Transit-Oriented Development in the United States: Experiences, Challenges, and Prospects [PDF file]. Retrieved from [https://www.valleymetro.org/images/uploads/general\\_publications/TCRP-Report-102\\_TOD-in-the-US-Experiences-Challenges-and-Prospects\\_10-04.pdf](https://www.valleymetro.org/images/uploads/general_publications/TCRP-Report-102_TOD-in-the-US-Experiences-Challenges-and-Prospects_10-04.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> McTigue, N. (2019, September 13). The Advantages of Transit-Oriented Development. *BlumShapiro*. Retrieved from <https://www.blumshapiro.com/insights/the-advantages-of-transit-oriented-development/>

<sup>10</sup> Transit-Oriented Development Toolkit for CT [PDF file].

<sup>11</sup> The Center for Neighborhood Technology. (2013, March). The New Real Estate Mantra: Location Near Public Transportation [PDF file]. Retrieved from [https://cdn.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/migration\\_files/smart-growth-Home-Values-Performed-Better-Near-Public-Transportation-2013-03.pdf](https://cdn.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/migration_files/smart-growth-Home-Values-Performed-Better-Near-Public-Transportation-2013-03.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> American Public Transportation Association. (n.d.). Public Transportation Facts. Retrieved from <https://www.apta.com/news-publications/public-transportation-facts/>

<sup>14</sup> Norland, R., Ozbay, K., DiPetrillo, S., & Iyer, S. (2014, October). Measuring Benefits of Transit Oriented Development. *Mineta National Transit Research Consortium*. Retrieved from <https://transweb.sjsu.edu/sites/default/files/1142-measuring-TOD-benefits.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Abu-Khalaf, A. (2020, September). New Reflections on Affordable Housing Design, Policy and Production: Overcoming Barriers to Bringing Accessory Dwelling Unit Development to Scale [PDF file]. *Enterprise Community Partners*.

close by, remain in a familiar neighborhood, and save money while on a fixed income.<sup>16</sup> With Connecticut's population steadily aging,<sup>17</sup> supporting our older residents is critical. Finally, ADUs benefit young adults, particularly those just starting out their career in vital, but traditionally lower-paying fields such as social work or teaching.<sup>18</sup> Across the country, the share of entry-level, starter homes has declined while demand continues to grow.<sup>19</sup> ADUs can help fill this gap.

To further strengthen this bill, we suggest adding language requiring that any housing construction with 10 or more units to set aside 10 percent (or more) of units to be designated as affordable housing as defined by Section 8-30g. Requiring deed-restricted affordable units is critical to support low-income residents and prevent displacement.

Allowing higher density housing and by-right ADUs in close proximity to CTfastrak stations and train stations is the right choice for Connecticut's future. This bill will increase access to more affordable and more diverse housing, boost Connecticut's economy, and support all Connecticut residents. **For these reasons, Connecticut Voices for Children supports HB 6570: An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Development and Municipal Zoning.**

#### **Just Facts:**

- Under this legislation, just one-half of a percent of land in the state would be affected.<sup>20</sup>
- 49 percent of renters statewide spend more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing, a benchmark conventionally used to indicate that a tenant is cost-burdened. Just over 50 percent of those renters spend more than 50% of their monthly income on housing, indicating a severe cost-burden.<sup>21</sup>
- The construction of 100 affordable housing units creates 120 jobs.<sup>22</sup>
- The ripple effect from residents living in new units can support as many as 30 new jobs in a wide array of industries.<sup>23</sup>
- The creation of new, market-rate housing is proven to aid in driving down housing costs across municipalities.<sup>24</sup>
- Research in California found that nearly 20 percent of those who lived within a half-mile to transit used it to travel to work, compared with less than nine percent of those living more than a half-mile from transit.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Sanderson, D. (2019). Accessory Dwellings: Help for Aging in Place [PDF file]. *Society of Certified Senior Advisors*. Retrieved from [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.csa.us/resource/resmgr/docs/journals/journal\\_73/sanderson.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.csa.us/resource/resmgr/docs/journals/journal_73/sanderson.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Cooper, J. (2019, February 6). Feds: CT getting older in 80% of towns, cities. *Hartford Business Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.hartfordbusiness.com/article/feds-ct-getting-older-in-80-of-towns-cities>

<sup>18</sup> Sanderson, D. (2019). Accessory Dwellings: Help for Aging in Place [PDF file]. *Society of Certified Senior Advisors*.

<sup>19</sup> Willis, H. (2021, January 7). Accessory dwellings offer one solution to the affordable housing problem. *Washington Post*.

<sup>20</sup> Desegregate Connecticut. (n.d.). Unlocking Transit-Oriented Development.

<sup>21</sup> Partnership for Strong Communities. (2020). Housing Data Profiles.

<sup>22</sup> Cohen, R. & Wardrip, K. (2011). The Economic and Fiscal Benefits of Affordable Housing [PDF file]. *Planning Commissioners Journal*.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Mast, E. (2019, July 1). The Effect of New Market-Rate Housing Construction on the Low-Income Housing Market [PDF file]. *W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research*.

<sup>25</sup> Transportation Research Board. (2004, January). Transit-Oriented Development in the United States: Experiences, Challenges, and Prospects [PDF file].

- The kinds of communities supported by transit - walkable, mixed-used neighborhoods that include housing, shops, and services - are popular among young professionals and empty nesters.<sup>26</sup>
- Homes in close-proximity to transit have more resilient property values in the face of economic downturns.<sup>27</sup>
- Households that use public transportation instead of driving can save nearly \$10,000 annually.<sup>28</sup>
- Research suggests that transit oriented development has, at best, a positive impact on property values in surrounding neighborhoods, and, at worst, a neutral effect.<sup>29</sup>

Thank you,

Erin Sheehan  
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Connecticut Voices for Children

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<sup>26</sup> Transit-Oriented Development Toolkit for CT [PDF file].

<sup>27</sup> The Center for Neighborhood Technology. (2013, March). The New Real Estate Mantra: Location Near Public Transportation [PDF file].

<sup>28</sup> American Public Transportation Association. (n.d.). Public Transportation Facts.

<sup>29</sup> Norland, R., Ozbay, K., DiPetrillo, S., & Iyer, S. (2014, October). Measuring Benefits of Transit Oriented Development. *Mineta National Transit Research Consortium*. Retrieved from <https://transweb.sjsu.edu/sites/default/files/1142-measuring-TOD-benefits.pdf>