Chairs Williams and Lopes, Ranking Members Polletta and Cicarella, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 5204, AN ACT CONCERNING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FAIR SHARE PLANS FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

I appreciate the Committee raising this bill and continuing the discussion on how our state can address our growing need for housing in a responsible and equitable way. The "Fair Share" model, developed in New Jersey and envisioned under this bill, will empower our towns to build diverse housing options based on state and regional needs. Maybe I am an optimist, but I believe this approach will lead to less divisive politics when it comes to housing as communities will have a clear goal to achieve and the ability to develop their own plan to meet that benchmark.

There has been a lot of scholarship in recent years highlighting the impact that exclusionary, and racist, housing policies have had on our neighborhoods years after the legal authority for those policies has been struck down. And this can be tracked here in Connecticut when we look at health outcomes, concentrations of pollution, school test scores and graduation rates – any number of measures. I believe Connecticut is making important steps to address these issues. And this bill is another important step we can take.

It is unconscionable that a hard-working family must work 91 hours a week at minimum wage to afford the average two-bedroom apartment. But, that is what is happening. Families are working multiple jobs yet barely surviving because their income is spent on overwhelming housing costs. In fact, Connecticut has the 10th highest housing wage in the nation.

Preliminary state data shows that fewer building permits for new housing were granted in 2021 than in every year since 2011, further contributing to Connecticut's housing shortage. We as a state and country have not kept up with the ever-increasing housing demand. According to the Department of Economic and Community Development, Connecticut fell behind on housing production last year. Yes, the pandemic is partly to blame for this reduction as some developers have paused production and demolition due to the increased costs of materials and labor. However, low housing production is a product of quite frankly, poor planning. Fair Share will put the state on track to create new housing opportunities for all.

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2 Id.
and kickstart the economy within the state. Economic stagnation in Connecticut is, and has always been, by choice. It's time to choose another path because when individual communities suffer, the state suffers.

This bill allows Connecticut to address its affordable housing and housing segregation crises all while ensuring that individual towns remain in the driver's seat when it comes to how and where they build more housing. Fair Share will build enough housing that is located across the entire state so families can choose where to thrive. It will employ thousands of skilled tradespeople, create opportunities for tens of thousands of new small businesses, attract millions of dollars of big business investment, and generate billions of dollars of economic activity. In doing this, we will build communities that are fair, just, and prosperous.

We owe it to the generations of families that have been harmed by archaic statewide housing policy to help revitalize their communities. We must invest in our cities for the overall benefit of the state. New Jersey has already seen success with the Fair Share model. I hope Connecticut will be among the leaders in creating a more equitable state for all.

For these reasons, I urge favorable consideration in moving this bill forward.

Sincerely,

Jason Rojas

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3 CT Mirror, https://ctmirror.org/2022/03/10/fair-share-would-end-zonings-stranglehold-on-the-ct-economy-richard/?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=CT+Morning+Blend&utm_campaign=CTMorningBlend03102022