

Chairs Moore and Luxenberg, and honorable colleagues,

I am sure that there will be impassioned testimony at this hearing from all points of view. I do believe that people on all sides of the issue have real and valid concerns.

Today I am testifying in favor of local control of our towns and cities, reform to the 8-30g statute, and a plan for affordable housing with community support. Specifically, I oppose HB6633 and support 5326. I also support bipartisan Senate Bills 853, 856, and 857, which were not raised.

The reality is that the status quo, whereby 8-30g takes away significant local input from towns over decisions, has not created economic mobility in our state. Poverty actually increased in our state in the 33 years since the law was passed, while it decreased nationwide.

At the same time, the policy is deeply unfair to communities. In my district, for example, there is an 8-30g application to build 100-unit development in a single-family-zoned neighborhood. An older neighbor has lived in her home for many decades and will now have a 50-foot-high wall abutting her property. Right before the application was submitted, a young family moved just across the street for the quiet neighborhood and will now have to deal with the same. Almost none of us would want this for ourselves.

8-30g encourages this outcome because it only gives credit for deed-restricted and government-supported housing. At the same time, our towns and cities allow development of many, many more housing units that are diffuse and affordable, but state law penalizes them for it. This discrete affordable housing enjoys strong local support. It includes apartments, condos, small homes, accessible dwelling units, senior and workforce housing.

If we give municipalities the ability to count this "naturally occurring affordable housing" in their 8-30g calculations, and enable them to subsidize it, we will see more of it constructed. It will not incur the opposition of highly dense 8-30g developments like the example on Weed Street.

I have also seen firsthand how local input strengthens support for affordable housing from my town's Affordable Housing Trust. For that reason, one of my bills also gives towns a choice to use using area-or-state median income ... and to develop more senior housing to satisfy 8-30g.

By contrast, HB6633, the Fair Share plan, would triple down on all the worst characteristics of current statute and demoralize our towns and cities. It would either force municipalities to raise property taxes by billions across the state to meet the putative mandates or eviscerate zoning entirely over entire communities. It's just not right.

The good news is there is a better way. Connecticut can protect its time-honored tradition of local control while creating more opportunity and affordable housing for our residents. Please stop HB6633 and advance solutions like HB5326 to achieve those ends.