

TESTIMONY ON

HB 6633: An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing

Testimony by:

Donna Jolly on behalf of the Coalition on Diversity & Equity (CoDE)

February 28, 2023

Co-chairs and members of the Housing Committee,

On behalf of the Coalition on Diversity and Equity (CoDE), I am testifying in support of HB 6633.

CoDE is a nonprofit organization serving the towns of Hebron, Marlborough, Andover and Columbia, and surrounding communities. Our mission is to build more diverse, equitable and vibrant communities by increasing community awareness and equal access to housing, education and jobs. We aim to identify and address barriers in town regulations, policies and procedures that might inadvertently prevent persons of various races, ethnicities and economic status from moving to our high-opportunity communities.

Each of the towns we serve have taken important steps to increase housing choices, but like many small towns in Connecticut, they have a long way to go. According to [state data](#), none of these towns have more than 3.87% of its housing stock considered affordable (with one at only 2%). Many current residents are cost-burdened, spending over 30% of their income on housing. And people who work in these towns (in schools, health care, banks, restaurants and retail) are often priced out of living there. Ultimately, restrictive zoning raises housing costs, stifles economic development, and prevents young professionals, families, and seniors from remaining in the community they love and more diverse populations to move to our towns.

Over the last two and a half years, CoDE has engaged in numerous conversations with town officials and residents about why it is great to live in these towns. One thing is clear – being exclusive is not one of those reasons. In fact, people want to live in a community that is diverse and welcoming.

This Fair Share bill will help make our communities more inclusive places to live and contribute to economic growth and revitalization of our cities and towns. Modeled after successful legislation in New Jersey and informed by research on economic opportunity, this bill has the potential to create much needed affordable housing, and generate jobs and tax revenue. This bill will provide of a set of tools and laws that make sure our zoning and planning systems are fair and equitable. For these reasons, CoDE supports Fair Share Planning and Zoning.