



Partnership for Strong Communities promotes equitable change in Connecticut housing policy by coordinating advocacy, advancing research, and uniting diverse partners.

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS
COMMITTEE

CHELSEA ROSS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES
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S.B. 351: AN ACT INCREASING FUNDING FOR THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT
ACCOUNT

Senator Flexer, Representative Blumenthal, Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. 351: AN ACT INCREASING FUNDING FOR THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACCOUNT. I am Chelsea Ross, Executive Director at the Partnership for Strong Communities. We are a statewide nonprofit research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring everyone in Connecticut has a safe, stable home that is affordable to them in an equitable community of their choice.

We support S.B. 351 which would increase the recording fee received by the Community Investment Act (CIA) from \$40 to \$45, and thereby increasing funding available for critical affordable housing and homelessness services.

Connecticut has a gap of approximately 92,500 affordable homes available to extremely low-income renter households- those earning 0-30% AMI. There are only 37 affordable and available homes for every 100 households with incomes at or below 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The Department of Housing (DOH) uses allocations from CIA to advance housing development initiatives, particularly needed capital for predevelopment loans. These funds often provide the predevelopment support necessary to move projects forward that will leverage other state bonding



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programs like the Affordable Housing Program (FLEX) and the Housing Trust Fund (HTF). The flexibility of CIA funds eliminates the need to navigate the bond commission process and allows DOH to get projects going quickly.

Currently, more than 119,000 renter households in Connecticut face severe housing cost burdens, meaning these families spend more than half of their income on their housing expenses. Regrettably, our state has witnessed an increase of 3,000 severely cost burdened households since 2020. We have also seen a 14% rise in homelessness year over year since 2021 and are experiencing the highest reported unsheltered crisis in recent history. We are moving in the wrong direction.

DOH uses allocations from CIA as an essential resource for the Coordinated Access Networks (CANs) which serve all individuals and families experiencing literal homelessness across the state. The CAN infrastructure greatly reduces duplication and provides efficient assistance to households via a single point of entry, unified assessment, diversion, prioritization, and matching to appropriate and available housing resources. The CAN system allows our communities to respond better to client needs, and to assign services and housing more effectively and efficiently, including to those with the most severe and complex needs.

CAN's need stable, consistent funding. The state funding that has come consistently to CANs has come from CIA funds administered at the discretion of the DOH. Without a stable funding source, CANs are often forced to lay-off staff while awaiting new funding, leading to gaps in service coverage and longer wait times for intake assessments for those experiencing homelessness. Ensuring that our CANs continue to have the resources they need to do this work, ensures that when Connecticut residents do find themselves in a housing emergency, that they will be aided in a swift, cost-effective way to achieve permanent housing stability.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.