



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

## **TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSING COMMITTEE**

**SEAN GHIO, POLICY DIRECTOR  
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES  
TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2024**

**H.B. 5334: AN ACT REQUIRING THE MAJORITY LEADERS' ROUNDTABLE GROUP ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO STUDY RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY COUNSELING PROGRAMS IN THE STATE**

**H.B. 5335: AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF MIDDLE HOUSING**

**H.B. 5336: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT HOUSING AND SEGREGATION STUDY**

**H.B. 5337: AN ACT CONCERNING AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES**

Senator Moore, Representative Felipe, Senator Sampson, Representative Scott, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee, I am Sean Ghio, Policy 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. Thank you for the opportunity to submit the following testimony.

**H.B. 5334: AN ACT REQUIRING THE MAJORITY LEADERS' ROUNDTABLE GROUP ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO STUDY RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY COUNSELING PROGRAMS IN THE STATE**

We support studying the effectiveness of mobility counseling programs in the state. is an important step towards increasing housing choice for voucher recipients.



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We ask the committee to consider the recommendations put forward in testimony from Open Communities Alliance:

(1) The state's current mobility counseling program has been operating at a severe disadvantage with voucher values not keeping up with rapid rent increases, so program outcomes do not reflect the hard work that is happening or the potential of the program.

(2) The Department of Housing is launching two new mobility counseling efforts in New Haven and Fairfield Counties, so a review would be more comprehensive if it could include those initiatives as well.<sup>1</sup>

### **H.B. 5335: AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF MIDDLE HOUSING**

We respectfully request that the committee **support with amendments H.B. 5335: An Act Concerning The Development Of Middle Housing**. This bill would reward municipalities with housing unit-equivalent points towards a 4-year moratorium from the Affordable Housing Appeals Act for middle housing. Qualifying middle housing must be built on a lot zoned for residential, commercial, or mixed-use development in which middle housing is a permitted use and that is currently served by a public sewer and water system. Middle housing - familiar housing types such as duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, cottage clusters, and townhouses - are a traditional form of lower cost housing and housing diversity that can fit well into any community. These homes can allow people with a diversity of incomes and experiences access to more neighborhoods with only minimal increases in population density.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2024/hsgdata/TMY/2024HB-05334-R000305-Boggs,%20Erin,%20Executive%20Director-Open%20Communities%20Alliance--TMY.PDF>



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A foundational feature of the Affordable Housing Appeals Act is that it counts housing restricted to lower income families in any given municipality and families renting housing with housing vouchers. As written, there is no guarantee that market rate middle housing will be affordable to lower income households. There is also no means to ensure that a lower cost market rate home will be occupied by a lower income tenant.

We commend the committee for its many efforts to create more tools to address our affordable housing crisis, is laudable. We ask the Committee consider ways to incentivize municipalities to allow greater density by-right and connect those incentives to some level of required affordability.

#### **H.B. 5336: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT HOUSING AND SEGREGATION STUDY**

We respectfully request that the committee ensure that the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) process continue to provide meaningful opportunities for public input into the QAP. Currently, CHFA must allow the general public an opportunity to express their views through comments on each proposed QAP. The process undertaken by CHFA allows for public and industry participation and the resulting QAP. Requiring elements outside of the federal requirements may have the unintended consequences of limiting public input.

#### **H.B. 5337: AN ACT CONCERNING AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES**

We respectfully request that the committee **oppose H.B. 5337: An Act Concerning Affordable Housing Development Practices**. If passed, Section 2 of H.B. 5337 would require developers that submit affordable housing applications to zoning commissions to provide a surety bond of \$100,000 for a one-year period to be paid out to the town in the event the developer withdraws the affordable housing application. Requiring a surety bond of affordable housing developers serves to make it more difficult and expensive to develop affordable homes. This is in



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opposition to the state's policy goal to increase the supply of affordable housing. This policy could discourage investment in much-needed projects, exacerbating the shortage of affordable homes. We ask the committee to strike Section 2 of the bill before it moves forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.