



**Testimony On H.B. 6864 – An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium  
Ending June Thirtieth, 2027, and Making Appropriations Therefor**

Appropriations Conservation & Development Subcommittee  
February 26, 2025

Mendi Blue Paca  
President & CEO, Fairfield County's Community Foundation

Senator Osten, Representative Walter, Senator Hartley, Senator Kushner, Representative Exum, Representative Paris, Senator Somers, Representative Nuccio, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

[Fairfield County's Community Foundation](#) respectfully requests that the Appropriations Committee **support the increases to Rental Assistance Program (RAP) as outlined in H.B. 6864: An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2027 and making Appropriations Therefor**. We respectfully request that the Committee increase the investment in RAP to \$20 million each year. This includes \$11.5 million to keep pace with escalating rental costs and maintain the number of families served by RAP, and \$8.5 to expand RAP and provide a stable home to nearly 650 more low-income families in the next fiscal year.

Fairfield County's Community Foundation serves twenty-three towns and cities, collaborating with organizations, businesses, and philanthropists to foster a fair and just community where all residents can thrive and has had a longstanding focus on addressing Fairfield County's affordable housing crisis. Our efforts have evolved from funding housing developments to driving systemic change, including helping establish the Fairfield County Collaborative Fund for Affordable Housing in 2006, which invested \$4.8 million to create over 1,000 affordable homes, benefiting 5,000 residents, generating nearly 1,400 jobs, and contributing \$472 million to the regional economy. We also played a key role in establishing Fairfield County's Center for Housing Opportunity (FCCHO) and annually grant over \$500,000 to advance safe, stable, and affordable housing in our region.

Our investments reflect our belief that housing is fundamental to the overall health of a community. When people can readily access housing, it sets the stage for a vibrant society. It makes it easier to put down roots and support neighbors. It makes it easier for businesses to find and keep productive, skilled workers. It makes it easier for children to learn and thrive. And it means that older residents can continue to live and enjoy the community they call home.

Fairfield County ranks last in Connecticut in most key affordable housing measures. According to our [Fairfield County Community Wellbeing Index 2023](#), between 2020 and 2022, Fairfield County rental rates have increased 22%, making our affordable housing issue even more challenging. These conditions are leading to a dramatic rise in homelessness. The state's most recent point-in-time count of those experiencing homelessness has increased for three straight years.

Connecticut's Rental Assistance Program currently serves approximately 6,500 households. The program has a closed waitlist that has only been open for roughly four weeks in the last 17 years. Applicants can remain on the RAP waitlist for years. When the waiting list for RAP last opened in August of 2014, there were over 86,000 applications in only two weeks, and of those, 3,000 households were selected by lottery and placed on the

state's waiting list. Households had about a 1 in 10 chance of being connected to a voucher. Research demonstrates that housing vouchers increase housing stability, household income, reduce racial disparities, and improve health and educational outcomes for all members of a household's family.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony **in support of** increasing the investment in RAP to \$20 million each year and for your role in making important decisions that have the power to shape a more fair and affordable future for Connecticut renters.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Lutonya Russell-Humes, Vice President of Grants and Programs, [lrussell-humes@fccfoundation.org](mailto:lrussell-humes@fccfoundation.org), 203-750-3223.

Sincerely,

Mendi Blue Paca  
President & CEO