



**Testimony in Support of H.B. 5260, An Act Prohibiting a Municipality from Imposing a Penalty  
for the Performance of Certain Activities of Daily Living  
Housing Committee Public Hearing  
Tuesday, February 24, 2026**

Good morning Representative Felipe, Senator Marx, Vice Chairs Gaston and Roberts, Ranking Members Sampson and Scott, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee.

In Connecticut, the stakes are not abstract. We face a critical shortage of affordable housing and persistent inequities that disproportionately impact communities of color, older adults, people with disabilities, youth, and families. And the toll is devastating. This winter alone, we have learned of 20 deaths of people who were experiencing homelessness, and more than 130 last year alone. Those are not statistics to me. They were neighbors with stories, people with dreams and capacity, veterans, parents, sons, daughters, artists, workers and people who deserved safety and the s

My name is Sarah Fox, and I serve as Chief Executive Officer of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. Through the CT CAN End Homelessness campaign, we work alongside homeless service providers, outreach teams, municipalities, state agencies, health care and behavioral health partners, schools, community and faith-based organizations, and other cross-sector leaders in every region to prevent homelessness, respond to crises, and help our neighbors regain stable housing. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. 5260.

I am also someone who has personally experienced homelessness and housing instability. I know what it feels like when safety is uncertain when you are trying to hold your life together while the ground keeps shifting beneath you. That experience is part of why I am here.

This bill is about what kind of communities we want to be.

All of us want safe, healthy, thriving neighborhoods, places where businesses can succeed, public spaces are welcoming, and people can count on one another. H.B. 5260 moves us toward that shared goal because it draws a clear line: no one should be punished for trying to survive sleeping, resting, or seeking shelter when they have nowhere else to go. Connecticut has led before. In 2013, our state codified the [Homeless Person's Bill of Rights](#), affirming that people experiencing homelessness are entitled to the same rights and protections as any other resident. H.B. 5260 is the next step in that lineage clarifying that municipalities may not impose penalties for unavoidable activities of daily living when a person has no reasonable alternative.

That clarity matters even more right now.

At the federal level, we're seeing a push toward enforcement-driven responses to visible homelessness, framing homelessness as "crime and disorder" instead of the housing and public health challenge it is. Connecticut does not have to follow that path. We can choose a response that reflects who we are: practical, humane, and focused on what actually works.

Because homelessness is not a crime. It is a housing crisis, and for many people, it's also a health crisis.

And the numbers here are moving in the wrong direction and the urgency is growing. [DataHaven's new 2026 analysis documents what providers and municipalities are seeing: homelessness has risen each year from 2021 through 2025, and unsheltered homelessness has surged from 294 people on a given night in 2022 to 833 in 2025, a 183% increase, including a 45% jump in just one year.](#) That increase is statewide small towns and rural communities included and many communities have limited shelter capacity, meaning people are forced to seek help far from home or are left with no safe option at all.

And we need to be clear about what is driving this in Connecticut. DataHaven shows that when people enter shelters, the top causes are overwhelmingly about affordability: **expenses exceeding income (28%), doubling up (22%), and legal eviction or foreclosure (13%)** together **63%** of shelter entries. This is a housing and income crisis. And it is colliding with rising insecurity: DataHaven reports that **11% of Connecticut adults over 300,000 people ran out of money for housing in the past year**, the highest level since that survey began.

In that context, ticketing, fining, arresting, or displacing someone for resting or sleeping outside does not reduce homelessness. It makes it harder to exit homelessness by creating court debt, records, and compounding instability that can block employment and housing. It pushes people into less visible and often more dangerous places. It breaks trust with outreach teams. It drains municipal resources without addressing the root issue: people do not have a safe place to go.

There's also a hard cost reality. When we respond with citations and arrests, we don't make homelessness disappear. We shift the cost into police time, ambulance, emergency rooms hospital stays, and into the revolving door of our corrections and our carceral system. Housing is the fiscally responsible option because it reduces the churn through crisis care and repeated emergency response.

And right now, Connecticut cannot afford to lose ground especially with federal instability. DataHaven's report describes how federal policy shifts last fall created serious risk to Connecticut's permanent supportive housing resources, noting that more than 6,000 Connecticut residents who are currently housed could be put at risk under future changes an impact that could triple homelessness here if those housing resources are destabilized. That is exactly why Connecticut must strengthen protections and stay anchored in what works.

I've also seen what housing makes possible.

I have seen people come inside after years of relationship-building with outreach. I have sat in their living rooms once they were housed. I have watched the relief when they close a door that locks. I have seen health improve, humor return, and possibility expand. Stability changes everything.

That is the Connecticut I believe in.

H.B. 5260 does not prevent municipalities from maintaining public order. It does not excuse harmful conduct. It simply establishes that we will not penalize people for basic, unavoidable activities of daily living when we have not ensured safe alternatives. If someone has nowhere safe to sleep, punishing them for sleeping does not move them closer to housing. It moves them further from it.

And we recognize there is more work ahead. This bill should be paired with continued collaboration between the legislature, municipalities, Department of Housing, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, providers, outreach teams, and community partners so municipalities are not left absorbing the downstream costs of homelessness through police, EMS, hospitals, and public works, without the housing and support tools that actually reduce homelessness.

Connecticut can lead, building on the Homeless Person's Bill of Rights, strengthening protections for our neighbors, and committing to the daily work of bringing everyone inside with dignity and urgency.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support H.B. 5260. Thank you for your leadership and the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Sarah Fox  
CEO  
CT Coalition to End Homelessness