



## Testimony Supporting H.B. 5482: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Fair Housing Working Group

### Testimony Supporting H.B. 5045: An Act Establishing Accountability for Fair and Affordable Housing through Zoning Regulations

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Senator Cassano, Senator Logan, Representative Lemar, Representative Zawistowski, and esteemed members of the Planning and Development Committee:

I am submitting testimony today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of H.B. 5482: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Fair Housing Working Group and H.B. 5045: An Act Establishing Accountability for Fair and Affordable Housing through Zoning Regulations.

Both H.B. 5482 and H.B. 5045 seek to expand the number of communities in Connecticut that offer affordable housing options by creating mechanisms that incentivize municipalities to follow their statutory obligation to “encourage the development of housing opportunities, including multifamily dwellings” and to “promote economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate income households.”<sup>1</sup> Municipalities that do not follow these fair housing obligations would forfeit their access to discretionary state funding. **These bills will not only promote fair housing, they will also positively impact opportunities for youth in the state of Connecticut, thereby improving the economic vitality of Connecticut in future generations.**

There is a strong relationship between housing affordability and residential segregation in Connecticut.<sup>2</sup> There exist only 31 municipalities in Connecticut (18 percent of municipalities) that have housing markets made up of ten percent or more affordable housing units.<sup>3</sup> Twenty-two of these communities have more than 25 percent of residents who are people of color; these twenty-two high-affordable housing towns make up almost 72 percent of the population of residents of

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<sup>1</sup> Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 8-2(a)

<sup>2</sup> Rodriguez, Orlando. (2013). “Race, Poverty, and Residential Segregation.” *Connecticut Voices for Children*. Available at: <http://www.catholicsocialjustice.org/uploads/1/3/0/4/13041697/race-poverty-and-residential-segregation-in-ct.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Connecticut Department of Housing (2018). “H.B. 5482: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Fair Housing Working Group.” Informational page available at: [http://pschousing.org/files/FairHousing\\_WorkGroup\\_Recommendations.pdf](http://pschousing.org/files/FairHousing_WorkGroup_Recommendations.pdf)

color in the state.<sup>4</sup> *Of the fifteen towns in Connecticut with the lowest proportions of residents of color, zero towns have more than ten percent of housing units classified as affordable.*

As you can see, the differences in affordable housing options between Connecticut towns go beyond socioeconomic status to include dramatic residential segregation by race. Connecticut has a history of zoning, lending, and real estate practices that have contributed to creating high levels of residential segregation; this has led to a pattern where suburban and rural towns have predominantly white residents, and urban areas have a higher concentration of non-white residents, which is not a reflection of non-white residents choosing to live in segregated areas.<sup>5</sup> In addition, lower property values and a reduced tax base have led to a decline in resources and opportunities in communities with high concentrations of non-white residents.

Last year, my colleagues and I at Connecticut Voices for Children created a project for which we built a statistical model to understand what factors in Connecticut contribute to youth experiencing positive outcomes and to youth experiencing negative outcomes.<sup>6</sup> While many people attribute opportunity disparities exclusively to economic disparities, our analysis finds that many opportunities are influenced by both income and racial segregation. In particular, we found that higher levels of residential segregation correlated more strongly than per capita income rates with higher school suspension rates, higher juvenile arrest rates, less stable residential arrangements, and more child poverty. In short, residential segregation is a major barrier to youth opportunities and is linked to negative outcomes for Connecticut youth.

When municipal governments each have their own zoning policies, exclusionary policies in some towns unnecessarily burden families by forcing them to live in metropolitan regions that already have an eroded tax base. Increasing affordable housing in all communities is an empirically supported method for reducing racial residential segregation<sup>7</sup> and making the state—the whole state—more welcoming for *all* families. We support H.B. 5482 and H.B. 5045 for incentivizing municipalities in Connecticut to open their doors to low-income families and families of color and, in so doing, increase the opportunity for more children.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of H.B. 5482 and H.B. 5045. I am happy to answer further questions and can be reached at [lruth@ctvoices.org](mailto:lruth@ctvoices.org) or (203) 498-4240 x 112.

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<sup>4</sup> Analysis run by Lauren Ruth utilizing data from the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and comparing this to data provided by the Connecticut Department of Housing. ACS 5YE data is available at: <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkml> and the Connecticut Department of Housing data is available at: [http://pschousing.org/files/FairHousing\\_WorkGroup\\_Recommendations.pdf](http://pschousing.org/files/FairHousing_WorkGroup_Recommendations.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Harvard University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Ruth, Lauren., Alexandra Ricks, Rachel Leventhal-Weiner, and Daniel Long. (2017). “The Connecticut Youth Opportunity Atlas.” *Connecticut Voices for Children*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/Youth%20Opportunity%20Atlas%20Final.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Orfield, M. (2005). Land use and housing policies to reduce concentrated poverty and racial segregation. *Fordham Urb. LJ*, 33, 877.