



**Hartford Foundation for Public Giving testimony in support of**  
**Senate Bill 86, An Act Appropriating Funds for Housing Resources for the Homeless and to Prevent Homelessness**

**Senate Bill 804, An Act Concerning Inclusion in Certain Communities**

**House Bill 5681, An Act Concerning Municipal Opportunity Reimbursement and Educational Equity**

**House Bill 6239, An Act Concerning Housing Funding Allocation and Segregation**

**House Bill 6240, An Act Concerning Payment In lieu of Taxes for State Housing Authority Properties**

**Housing Committee**

**February 18, 2021**

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Good afternoon Senator Lopes, Representative McGee, Senator Cicarella, Representative Polletta and distinguished members of the Housing Committee. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of **several bills to prevent homelessness and expand access to quality, affordable housing in higher opportunity neighborhoods.**

**The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region.** As a community foundation, we manage approximately \$1 billion in assets, in 2020, the Foundation distributed a record-breaking \$52 million in grants to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than \$837 million since its founding in 1925.

As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and improve social and economic mobility for Black and Latinx residents of Greater Hartford, the Hartford Foundation seeks to **increase the number of Hartford residents living in higher opportunity neighborhoods.** Higher opportunity neighborhoods are defined by a variety of factors, including low unemployment, better performing schools, lower crime and greater availability of quality, affordable housing stock.

The Hartford Foundation seeks to increase the numbers of Hartford residents living in higher opportunity neighborhoods both by increasing the opportunities in Hartford neighborhoods and by increasing the ability of Hartford residents to choose to move to other higher opportunity areas throughout the Greater Hartford region. In order to support these outcomes, the Foundation invests in efforts designed to increase the stability, availability, and quality of affordable housing in the Greater Hartford region; align and leverage additional investment in Hartford neighborhoods, and increase social strength and connectedness of Hartford neighborhoods. COVID has reinforced the need for all of us to live in safe, stable homes, in safe, stable neighborhoods, in safe, stable communities.



Public commitment must address the interplay of basic human needs, including access to food, mental and physical health care services, housing and other needs, and provide adequate support to the nonprofit organizations providing these services.

While there has been significant progress in addressing homelessness, the challenges in finding and keeping affordable permanent housing persists. While the homeless population has decreased in Connecticut, every day more than 3,000 people still don't have a home of their own. In Hartford, 57 percent of renters spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, leaving little to cover other expenses such as transportation, childcare, or food.

Significant portions of our past and current investments have focused on preventing and reducing homelessness in the Greater Hartford region. On an annual basis, the Foundation provides approximately \$1 million to local nonprofit organizations to provide access to emergency shelter, housing subsidies, case management, eviction prevention/landlord negotiation, employment services, and housing services to residents' at-risk or experiencing homelessness. This includes support to the Greater Hartford Coordinated Access Network for rapid re-housing services during the coldest months.

**For these reasons, the Foundation supports Senate Bill 86 which provides \$2.3 million additional funding annually for the Coordinated Access Networks (CANs) and 2-1-1.** These funds are crucial to advancing our statewide efforts to end homelessness. The CAN infrastructure reduces service duplication and allows resources to be used efficiently to assist households by providing 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 prioritization of those with the most severe and complex needs.

Organizations in Greater Hartford and across Connecticut continue to provide solutions that are data-driven. Service providers are collaborating through the Coordinated Access Networks to address and respond to the critical needs of individuals and families and continually improving the centralized response system. The Hartford Foundation's sustained commitment of resources continues to play an essential role, but philanthropic investments cannot and should not replace ongoing public investment.

**The Foundation also supports the concepts raised in Senate Bill 804, Act Concerning Inclusion in Certain Communities,** including the bill's prioritization of permitting a mixture of housing options including accessory dwelling apartments and middle housing types to incrementally expand access to quality, affordable housing in higher opportunity neighborhoods. We also support the legislation's call for requiring training for local land use commissioners to educate them on existing federal and state affordable housing laws.

**The Foundation also offers its support of House Bill 5681, An Act Concerning Municipal Opportunity Reimbursement and Educational Equity,** a proposal which seeks to incentivize municipalities to adopt more inclusive affordable housing policies. Municipalities that develop local zoning ordinances that further fair housing practices and expand the development of affordable multifamily housing, mixed-use development, and accessory dwellings will enable a diverse mix of households to live in their communities and would benefit from this proposal.



These policies would enable students from lower-income families to have access to communities with higher-performing schools, create more diverse communities throughout the state, and create significant economic benefits for towns by diversifying housing options. We know that Connecticut has the dubious distinction of being one of the most segregated states in the nation. By linking educational opportunity and affordable housing opportunity, this legislation provides a valuable tool in the state's effort to create more inclusive housing development throughout our state.

The Foundation also offers **its support of House Bill 6239, An Act Concerning Housing Funding Allocation and Segregation**, which requires the Department of Housing to gather data to determine whether state housing funding decisions impact racial and economic segregation.

According to an investigation by The Connecticut Mirror and ProPublica, since the mid-1980s, Connecticut has awarded almost \$2.2 billion in low-income housing tax credits to construct 27,000 affordable housing units in the state. Of those units, just 10 percent were built in prosperous towns, with about 80 percent located in struggling communities, creating concentrated "pockets of poverty" in our urban areas.

As the Department of Housing continues to respond to the housing crisis brought on by the pandemic, the committee should consider including additional funding to the Department to provide adequate staffing to complete this effort.

The Foundation also **supports House Bill 6240, An Act Concerning Payment In Lieu of Taxes for State Housing Authority Properties**. Like House Bill 5681, this legislation would provide financial incentives to municipalities that expand affordable housing in their communities. We support this proposal to provide PILOT funding to municipalities for State Housing Authority Properties, at one hundred percent of the amount of municipal property taxes that would have been paid of taxable properties.

The state needs a substantial increase in the supply of deed-restricted affordable housing units. This bill would create an opportunity for communities to provide the state with more of these units while allowing them to maintain local property tax rolls. While both HB 5681 and HB 6240 would require substantial state investments, they could provide the type of positive reinforcements necessary to allow municipalities to diversify their communities and create more affordable housing to strengthen the long-term future of our state. PILOT payments to municipalities that are stepping up and supporting the state's housing goals are a part of this investment. Currently it is our urban communities that are carrying the load in supporting the housing needs of entire regions. They deserve to be adequately compensated for their contributions.

The Foundation also offers its **support of House Bill 6430, An Act Concerning Housing Authority Jurisdiction**, which provides public housing authorities with the discretion to expand their jurisdiction to provide the residents they serve with access to housing options in high and very high opportunity communities. Our strategic priorities explicitly support increased housing choice and mobility for residents to ensure better access to higher paying jobs, diverse neighborhoods and quality schools. The Foundation has seen how the current system has severely limited families' access to housing in higher opportunity neighborhoods. In 2019 the Hartford Foundation provided a grant to support



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residents in Clay Arsenal Apartments, Barber Gardens, and Infill in Hartford, who wanted to move to areas of opportunity but were not given that choice. All three complexes had their contracts with the

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development terminated due to conditions that threatened residents' health and safety. The Foundation awarded grants to the Center for Leadership and Justice and Open Communities Alliance who worked with tenants to provide leadership training, legal assistance, and technical advice to navigate the complex housing situation and relocation process. Of the 150 Clay Arsenal families who were relocated, 61 percent wanted to move to Hartford suburbs such as West Hartford, Glastonbury, and Windsor. However, the timing of the relocation process and lack of affordable housing options in communities outside of Hartford meant that most families relocated to housing in the same, or similar, neighborhoods. This proposal represents a positive step forward in the effort to increase the economic, ethnic and racial diversity of our communities.

The Foundation looks forward to continuing its work with policymakers, nonprofits and residents to develop effective long-term policies to ensure that all Connecticut families have access to quality, affordable housing in higher opportunity neighborhoods.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our staff at [policy@hfp.org](mailto:policy@hfp.org) or 860-548-1888.