

## Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-7033

AN ACT PROHIBITING A MUNICIPALITY FROM IMPOSING ANY PENALTY ON HOMELESS PERSONS FOR PERFORMING LIFE-SUSTAINING ACTIVITIES

**Title:** ON PUBLIC LAND.

**Vote Date:** 3/6/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 2/27/2025

**File No.:** 243

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Housing Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

The initial intent of the bill would prohibit municipalities from imposing a fine on anyone engaged in life sustaining activities on public lands. Those who submitted testimony below testified on the original bill language. Considering some concerns raised in the public hearing and written testimony, the bill passed out of committee with JFS language that narrowed its scope. Now, rather than 'life sustaining activities', it is 'activities of daily living' that cannot result in a fine. Activities of daily living include seeking shelter, sleeping, resting, eating food, accessing medical care, and using hygiene facilities. Additionally, these activities may not take place on school grounds, a narrowed definition of 'public land'. The previously undefined civil penalty imposed on a town will now range from \$50-\$100 at the discretion of the Attorney General's office. With these changes, the bill will retain municipal authority over their land, continue to allow law enforcement to engage, when necessary, but will not permit the criminalization of someone for simply being homeless.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Garrett Eucalitto, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Transportation](#): CTDOT Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto testified in opposition of the bill. Eucalitto began with the potential impact on DOT as a significant local real estate holder, and his concerns over potentially unsafe encampments that may appear on their abutting properties. The Commissioner stated while the protections of homeless individuals are important, HB 7033 might limit municipalities' capacity to manage public spaces effectively. Additionally, he described the dangers that homeless people face when living near transportation

infrastructure. Eucalitto concluded by stating DOT's policies to assist the unhoused but affirmed his belief that this bill "would place an undue burden on CTDOT to manage issues outside our mandate".

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

[Gemini Brown, Member, Unhoused Activists Community Team](#): Gemini Brown testified in support of the bill as a currently unhoused individual in New Haven. Brown detailed their past year experiencing homelessness and urged the public to see their humanity: "Just because I'm homeless and had an addiction, I'm still human. I still have feelings and purpose...right now I don't have a place to call home, but I'll get there. The more I go to school I see other people who work and have jobs and are unhoused. It gives me motivation to change my situation."

[Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut](#): Jess Zaccagnino supported the bill, highlighting how rates of homelessness are higher among people of color and those who were formerly incarcerated. Zaccagnino and the ACLU supported this bill as a way to minimize interactions between the unhoused and law enforcement, as well as a validation of unhoused individual's right to exist.

[Josh Michtom, Council Member, Hartford City Council](#): Josh Michtom supported the bill, calling for a shift towards policies that aid the neediest and most vulnerable people in our communities. He noted it is larger Connecticut cities who contend with the greatest number of homeless, both by nature of their larger populations and because they host the most amount of resource providers. As such, it is especially important for the cities to not have antagonistic relationships between those in need and law enforcement.

[Lauren Garrett, Mayor, Town of Hamden](#): Lauren Garrett testified in support of the bill. Garrett described similar enacted legislation from the Hamden Legislative Council that declared housing as a human right and minimized the potential for penalties for the unhoused. Mayor Garrett concluded that Hamden has renewed efforts to assist the homeless and encouraged other municipalities to do so.

[Dr. Chelsea Connery, Staff Attorney, CT Fair Housing Center](#): Dr. Chelsea Connery testified in support of the bill, arguing that punitive measures against homeless individuals are cruel and ineffective. Connery cited recent statistics they see as contributing to homelessness, "[In 2024] homelessness increased 13% in Connecticut... [we lack] at least 110,000 units of affordable housing [while] rent increase[d] 20-40% in the last several years". Connery continued that "over 5,000 people, including 500 children" are currently homeless in Connecticut, with 900 of them being unsheltered. Connery sees compassion, decriminalization, and additional investments as the way to address this crisis.

[Stephanie Boyce, Director of Homeless Prevention, Outreach, and Food Access, Hands on Hartford](#): Stephanie Boyce supported this bill and highlighted how criminalizing life-sustaining activities perpetuates the cycle of homelessness. When a homeless person receives a civil or criminal citation, they are often unable to make their court appearance by nature of their situation, leading to their arrest. Boyce emphasized the need for compassionate policies that provide support rather than penalties.

[Billy Bromage, Social Worker](#): Billy Bromage testified in support of the bill. Bromage argued punitive measures against homeless individuals are ineffective, inhumane, and cause more harm than good. The testimony detailed Bromage's experience witnessing negative interactions between local law enforcement and the unhoused, as well as his volunteer experience. Bromage advocated for policies that address the root causes of homelessness.

[Emily Alves, Public Health Nurse, Uncas Health District](#): Emily Alves supported the bill, emphasizing that penalizing homeless individuals for life-sustaining activities exacerbates health disparities and fails to address the root causes of homelessness. Alves advocated for compassionate approaches that connect individuals to necessary services and supported the legislative agenda offered by the Connecticut Coordinated Access Networks (CANs).

[Dr. Fabiola Arbelo Cruz, Addiction Psychiatrist](#): Dr. Fabiola Arbelo Cruz supported the bill, highlighting that criminalizing basic survival activities is inhumane and counterproductive. They detailed their prolonged experience serving this community and offered an insight into why some choose to remain outside, including: flexibility, unwillingness to separate partner or pet, proximity, substance use needs, past traumas from shelters, and open warrants. Arbelo Cruz emphasized the need for policies that address systemic issues contributing to homelessness.

[Jennifer Erbland Foss, Recovery Support Specialist](#): Jennifer Erbland Foss supported the bill, highlighting that criminalizing homelessness perpetuates the “lather, rinse, and repeat” cycle of poverty and punishment.

[Amara Eterna, Harm Reduction Consultant](#): Amara Eterna supported the bill argued that punitive measures against homeless individuals are inhumane. They work directly with unhoused individuals and witnessed the harm caused by sweeps through encampments, arrests, and the lack of needed services.

[Dr. Jenna Gage](#): Dr. Gage supported the bill, emphasizing that the ability to deliver crucial medical treatments and interventions is dependent upon knowing where unhoused individuals will be and where they are going to be.

[Dr. Annie Harper](#): Dr. Harper supported the bill and emphasized it is inhumane to penalize unhoused individuals who are victims of the state’s lack of affordable housing.

[Amy Horner, MSW Student, UConn School of Social Work](#): Amy Horner supported the bill, emphasizing the need to look at homelessness through a more humane perspective. Horner detailed the 'revolving door' of incarceration for the homeless, provided statistics from the federal government on homelessness, and used their own experience to underscore the need to adjust our approach towards the unhoused.

[Danielle Hubley, Advocacy & Education Manager, Partnership for Strong Communities](#): Danielle Hubley supported the bill and emphasized that homelessness is a public health crisis. Hubley also supported the legislative agenda of the CT CANs.

[Jennifer Jasenski](#): Jennifer Jasenski testified in support the bill, discussing the many ways that a person can end up homeless, and how it can be an endless cycle.

[Dr. Emma Lo](#): Dr. Lo supported the bill, emphasizing how detrimental encampment clearings can be to a homeless persons' mental and physical health, impact one's access to resources, prevent groups offering assistance from finding those in need, and the unfairness of penalizing individuals when there are no available shelter beds.

[Caitlin Rose, CEO, Friendship Service Center](#): Caitlin Rose supported this the bill and urged for the decriminalization of homelessness: "there are no communities that will successfully arrest its way out of homelessness."

[Sarah White and Dahlia Romanow, Staff Attorneys, Connecticut Fair Housing Center](#): Attorneys White and Romanow supported the bill and discussed how unaffordable rental pricing is increasing the number of unhoused individuals. Additionally, they highlighted that HB 7033 will prevent municipalities from implementing legislation aimed at harming the homeless population.

The following submitted testimony in general support of the bill:

- [Raphael Podolsky, Attorney, Policy Advocate, Connecticut Legal Services](#)
- [Jennifer Paradis, Executive Director, Beth-El Center](#)
- [Kathleen Flaherty, Executive Director, Connecticut Legal Rights Project](#)
- [Dr. Alice Shen, Staff Psychiatrist, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#)
- [Jaida-Nyelle Sinkler, Student, Yale University](#)
- [Ada Meighan-Thiel, Student, Yale University](#)
- [Mahdere Yared, Student, Yale University](#)
- [Shannon Carter, Member, Unhoused Activist Community Team](#)
- [Sean McCreight, Rosette Village](#)
- [Adam Lytton, Associate Director, Prime Time House Inc.](#)
- [Dan Santorso, Executive Assistant, FISH NWCT Shelter](#)
- [Dr. Miranda Savioli, Member, UACT](#)
- [Alexis Terry, UACT](#)
- [Chris Senecal, Sr. Public Policy Officer, Hartford Foundation](#)
- [Cindy Prizio, President, One Standard of Justice](#)
- [Dr. Stephanie Wu](#)
- [Lucy Autumnsong](#)
- [Tanya Burley](#)
- [Joshua Caskey](#)
- [Abigail Coia](#)
- [Gabriel Conde](#)
- [Tyrone Daniels](#)
- [Deidre Gonzalez](#)
- [Roland Gunter Jr.](#)
- [Carita McDaniel](#)
- [Stephen Mercado](#)
- [Sara Moeller](#)
- [Alexa Montes Matias](#)
- [Michelle Noehren](#)
- [Mars Rodriguez](#)
- [Colleen Shaddox](#)
- [Anthony Torres](#)

- [Ronald Victory](#)

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

[Anabelle Diaz, School Principal](#): Anabelle Diaz opposed the bill and expressed concerns that the bill could lead to increased public health risks and negative implications for public spaces and safety. Diaz closed by advocating for increased access to mental health services, workforce development, better transitional assistance for those coming out of prison, and community partnerships to address these concerns locally.

[Jerry Cincotta](#): Jerry Cincotta opposed this bill and asserted it would provide special privileges for the homeless that others are not afforded. Cincotta viewed this bill as an 'unfunded mandate' for municipalities to provide homeless shelters and took issue with the proposed fine the Attorney General's office may levy on towns who do not comply with this legislation.

[Maria Weingarten, CoFounder, CT 169 Strong](#): Maria Weingarten testified in general opposition to this bill. Weingarten interpreted the bill as imposing an unfunded mandate on municipalities to provide alternative shelter for the unhoused residing on public land, as well as with the proposed civil penalty the Attorney General's office could pursue. In breaking down different lines in the bill, Weingarten posed a series of hypotheticals to illustrate where the bill is deficient, questioning whether someone could remain on a sports field, school property, in commercial districts, or even in the middle of the road, without being penalized. While many cited Connecticut's 13% increase in homelessness, Weingarten insisted the state still outperforms the nation, with Connecticut ranked 50<sup>th</sup> for chronic homelessness.

The following submitted testimony in general opposition of the bill:

- [Paul Arvoy, Stamford Neighborhood Coalition](#)
- [Julie Avellino](#)
- [Lisa Bernier](#)
- [John Hair](#)
- [Alexis Harrison](#)
- [Dave Swafford](#)

**Reported by:** Arianna Tsikitas, Clerk  
Zoe Kleinman, CGA Intern

**Date:** 3/21/2025