

Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-12

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S HOUSING NEEDS.

Vote Date: 3/6/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/13/2025

File No.: 251

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Senator Martin Looney and Senator Bob Duff

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill will address Connecticut ongoing housing crisis in a variety of ways. The bill will establish a starter home's working group, adjust school construction grant reimbursement rates, establish a pilot program through DOH to construct affordable housing, require residential rentals to have separate utility meters to charge for utilities, establish state-wide access to fair rent commissions, regulate as-of-right commercial conversion of commercial buildings, mandate CHFA administer a student loan debt pilot program, and adjust the rental assistance program. At the time of it's public hearing, the bill did not contain any additional details beyond its general goal.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Martin Looney, President Pro Tempore, Connecticut General Assembly](#): Senator Martin Looney testified in support of this bill to address housing affordability. Looney emphasized the need for statewide zoning reforms that will increase housing density and diversify housing options, while reforming exclusionary zoning practices. In conclusion, Looney supported the legislation that will create more inclusive and affordable communities.

[Bob Duff, Senate Majority Leader, Connecticut General Assembly](#) – Senator Bob Duff supported this bill. Duff stated that Connecticut is 135,000 units short of meeting residents' affordable housing needs and that half Connecticut's renters spend over 30% of their monthly

income on housing costs. Duff added that, "A 2016 study by the National Coalition to End Homelessness estimated that we would save \$4,800 a year for every homeless person we permanently shelter" and stated that ending homelessness is both "a just pursuit and fiscally prudent." Duff listed what must happen to accomplish these goals and concluded that it is "morally and economically unconscionable that we continue to allow this crisis to fester."

[Erin Boggs, Executive Director, Open Communities Alliance](#) – Erin Boggs testified in support of this bill. Boggs argued the bill's focus on promoting diverse housing options and increasing density are crucial to create more inclusive communities. Boggs argued that the legislation addresses the state's severe housing affordability crisis, which disproportionately affects marginalized populations.

[Keith Ainsworth, Attorney at Law](#) – Keith Ainsworth partially supported this bill, specifying that they support, "the concept of providing mechanisms for incentivizing the laudable goal of affordable housing, but OPPOSE loosening environmental standards and rights as part of that effort." Ainsworth added that one way to promote positive development would be to invest in transit-oriented communities.

[Matt Hart, Executive Director, Capitol Region Council of Governments](#) – Matt Hart supported this bill and shared the goals related to housing in CRCOG's recently adopted Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) which included preserving and diversifying the region's housing stock, increasing the inventory of affordable housing in the region, building housing adjacent to transit, and providing the region's vulnerable populations with a safe place to live. Hart highlighted the importance of statewide zoning reform in creating more equitable and affordable communities. Hart identified the Municipal Redevelopment Authority (MRDA) as a mechanism to facilitate transit-oriented development and encouraged the legislature to view councils of governments (COGS) as a resource to provide technical assistance to municipalities in housing planning and development.

[Jessica Doll, Executive Director, CTAA](#) – Jessica Doll supported this bill and stated that they are pursuing three major priorities, to accelerate housing development in Connecticut, protect the rights of residents and housing providers, and boost accountability for housing providers. Doll emphasized the importance of ensuring that any changes in zoning regulations include clear guidelines and resources to support assessors in adapting to the potential shifts in housing development and valuation.

[Samuel Gold, Executive Director, RiverCOG](#) – Samuel Gold supported this bill and suggested requiring, "the implementation of municipal plans of conservation and development (PoCD) by mandating that within a reasonable time following adoption, zoning be amended to conform with the plan." Gold believed the implementation of PoCDs should be required in this legislation. Gold described the benefits of building on the existing statutory process for creating and adopting a municipal PoCD and listed additional ideas for this bill.

[John Guskowski, Government Relations Officer, CT Chapt. Amer. Planning Assoc.](#) – John Guskowski supported this bill and made suggestions to increase housing opportunities, like greater state leadership on zoning, enhancing previous legislation, and offering more options for compliance.

[Sara Mendillo, Government Affairs, Middlesex County Chamber](#) – Sara Mendillo supported this bill and wrote the lack of workforce housing limits businesses' ability to attract workers, putting the state's broader economic competitiveness at risk. Mendillo urged the legislature to consider a range of approaches to address the housing crisis, including exploring policy measures that provide incentives for communities and developers to create new workforce housing options and conducting a comprehensive review of local zoning laws and health code requirements that may limit additional housing.

[Kally Moquete Esq., Senior Manager of Policy, Health Equity Solutions](#) – Kally Moquete supported this bill and stated that a report from the Connecticut Department of Housing indicates that communities of color, low-income residents, and individuals with disabilities are more likely to live in substandard housing conditions, leading to increased exposure to asthma triggers, lead, and other environmental health hazards. Moquete listed the key benefits of this bill and the limitations and recommendations.

[Mag Morelli, President, LeadingAge Connecticut](#) – Mag Morelli supported this bill and urged more affordable senior housing with features for accessibility and other needs for older adults. Morelli added that only one-in-three adults eligible for federal rental assistance receives it and waiting lists for housing assistance are often many years long or closed. Morelli shared data from 2021 stating that "Connecticut has more than 22,000 (29%) of 65 – 79-year-old and 11,000 (38%) of 80+ year-old renter households that are severely housing cost burdened", with incomes below 50% AMI, making them eligible for HUD housing programs they cannot access because of long waiting lists. Morelli highlighted the importance of integrating senior housing into communities to promote aging in place, reduce isolation, and free up housing stock for young families.

[Werner Oyanadel, Policy Director, CWCSEO](#) – Werner Oyanadel supported this bill. Oyanadel shared data on housing costs and wages in Connecticut and how the housing crisis is particularly devastating for historically marginalized communities, including Latino/a, African American, and Asian American families. They stated the localized approach to housing policy created disparities in affordable housing and, "There must be policies that incentivize truly affordable housing development while protecting residents from unsustainable rent hikes and housing discrimination while at the same time exploring ways to support landlords in maintaining sustainable and fair rental practices." Oyanadel shared that Community Land Trusts (CLTs) can provide a strong long-term solution by securing land for affordable housing that remains community controlled while utilizing existing financing streams.

[Jim Perras, CEO, HBRA of CT](#) – Jim Perras highlighted the existing housing affordability and accessibility crisis in Connecticut, emphasizing low rental vacancy rates and insufficient housing production. Perras included data from the National Association of Home Builders highlighting the economic realities faced by the residential construction industry. They provided a list of suggestions for consideration, including, improving land use, reducing regulatory barriers, enhancing financing options, supporting construction workforce development, considering tax incentives, and minimizing intrusions into the landlord/tenant relationship.

[Francis Pickering, Executive Director, WestCOG](#) – Francis Pickering supported this bill and offered suggestions for the Housing Committee to consider, including, addressing

construction costs, facilitating reuse, sharing homes, reducing the cost of living in a home, simplifying homebuying or rental and providing additional resources to fund homebuilding. Pickering expressed some concerns over the balance between state and local government on zoning regulations.

[Lilliana Sarju, Policy, Outreach Coordinator, CTLCV](#) – Lilliana Sarju supported this bill if implemented with adherence to EPA guidelines and environmental sustainability. Sarju stressed the need for housing policies that consider both affordability and environmental protections. They promoted resilient developments like transit-oriented communities which increase the supply of multi-family homes, facilitate the adaptive reuse of older buildings, and emphasize smaller energy-efficient housing units.

[Denise Savageau](#) – Denise Savageau supported this bill and recommended working on affordable housing and environmental justice together. Savageau's testimony highlighted the importance of managing water resources, planning for sustainable food practices, and preserving local biodiversity.

[Miranda Savioli, Physician](#) – Miranda Savioli supported this bill and advocated for the use of Pallet Shelters as transitional housing, stating that "Current state regulations restrict the use of Pallet Shelters to only 180 days, even though the lifespan of the materials to construct the shelters is 15 - 20 years." Savioli discussed Rosette Village in New Haven serving as a pilot for Pallet Shelter communities and the success of the program. Savioli stated that despite its success, Rosette Village faced legal challenges from the City of New Haven. Savioli provided more information on Pallet Shelters and their strengths, including that they can withstand up to 155 mph sustained winds, withstand 40lb per square foot of snow, are resistant to mold and mildew, and are equipped with smoke detectors, heating, and air conditioning systems. They concluded that the severe health consequences of homelessness and housing instability cannot be adequately addressed through traditional medical interventions alone.

[Melanie Strout, Community Engagement Manager, School and State Finance Project](#) – Melanie Strout supported this bill and stated that housing affordability and stability significantly impact students' educational outcomes. Strout wrote, "When families struggle to afford housing or experience instability, students are more likely to face disruptions in their schooling, increased absenteeism, and diminished academic achievement." Strout added that increasing and dispersing affordable housing throughout the state strengthens the stability of all Connecticut kids.

[Raphael Podolski](#) – Raphael Podolsky supported this bill. Podolski suggested ways to promote fair and equitable housing opportunities, including, promoting the development of long-term affordable housing in all towns, preventing attrition in the state's rental assistance program (RAP) by adequately funding the number of current certificates and expanding the program with additional certificates, and protecting the rights of renters in Connecticut by expanding just cause eviction protections.

The following testimonies expressed general support of the bill:

[Senate Democrats](#)

[Anastasia Brudzinski](#)

[Adam Callaghan](#)

[Nicole Aril, LMSW](#)

[Walter Glob, Executive Director, CT Council on DD](#)
[Joshua Caskey](#)
[Elizabeth Hogan](#)
[Liza Andrews, VP of Govt, Public Relations, CCADV](#)
[Victoria Como Jennifer Dayton, Director of Board of Directors, League of Women Voters of CT](#)
[Benjamin Candia](#)
[Alicea Charvat, Executive Director, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut](#)
[Jacquelyn Eaton](#)
[Francis Palaszewski, Director of Govt Affairs, NRLA, Lumber Dealers Association of CT](#)
[Betsy Gara, Executive Director, COST](#)
[Sean Ghia, Policy Director, The Partnership, PSC](#)
[Becky Kessler, Community Engagement Coordinator, CCEEJ](#)
[Shelley Michelson](#)
[James Norgren](#)
[Larry Rizzoli](#)
[Dondre Roberts, CTAA](#)
[Eli Sabin, Legislative Coordinator, CT Voices for Children](#)
[Richard Salon, Owner, Sadlon Properties, LLC Carol Scully, Director of Advocacy, The Arc Connecticut](#)
[Chris Senekal, Sr Public Policy Officer, Hartford Foundation](#)
[Francis Trace ski](#)
[Jim Trochi](#)
[Dana Walker](#)
[Shalin Zappulla](#)

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Bob De Cosmo, President, CT Property Owners Alliance](#): Bob De Cosmo expressed opposition to the bill out of concern for the rights of property owners and local zoning. De Cosmo struggled with the lack of contents in the bill as of the public hearing, but feared for the impact the legislation could have on property owners.

Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.: Maria Weingarten offered testimony in opposition to this bill, arguing it undermines local decision-making. Weingarten continued to express concerns with the potential impact on local zoning, including unfunded infrastructure expansion and environmental risk. Weingarten urged the legislature to include local input when crafting this legislation and listed several policy suggestions for the bill.

The following testimonies expressed general opposition to the bill:

[Donna Clarke, small scope property owner](#)
[Martin Garcia](#)
[Mona Aber egg](#)
[Hannah Linnell](#)
[David Prissier](#)
[Linda Dalessio](#)
[Anonymous](#)
[Samuel Eddinger](#)
[Paul Januszewski, Housing Provider](#)

[Brandon Rush, Property Owner, Housing Provider](#)

The following testimonies expressed general comments on the bill:

[Lauren Tagliatela](#)

[Jim Heckman, General Counsel, CT Realtors](#)

**Reported by: Arianna Tsikitas, Clerk
Jasmine Jones, Assistant Clerk**

Date: 3/25/2025