

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1277

AN ACT CONCERNING AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR CERTAIN DISABLED

Title: OR ELDERLY VETERANS.

Vote Date: 2/18/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/13/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

Rep. Joshua M. Hall, 7th Dist.

Sen. Saud Anwar, 3rd Dist.

Rep. Kurt Vail, 52nd Dist.

Rep. Jaime S. Foster, 57th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Currently, housing costs are rising across the state; this bill seeks to alleviate some of the stress of these rising costs on disabled and elderly veterans. By granting additional 8-30g points to towns for disabled veteran units, which are restricted to veterans at least 65 years old or with a disability rating of at least 30%, it incentivizes towns to set aside a portion of their affordable housing stock for disabled and elderly veterans.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

African American and Black Affairs Council: Several members expressed their support of any measures that would provide affordable housing to veterans. This testimony was provided by:

- **Hubert R. Watson Jr.**
- **Lewis Kelley**
- **Dolores Kelley**

Sherri A. Marquis, Federal VA Veteran Service Officer and Municipal Veterans

Representative, Somers DVA: Ms. Marquis stressed the importance of this bill in providing housing stability to veterans and their families and in reducing homelessness among veterans. She mentioned that many other states have enacted veterans housing programs and noted the effect of stable housing on veterans' overall well-being.

Tammy Salminen, Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans Chapter 17: Ms. Salminen expressed her support for this bill and pointed out that providing veterans with housing options either fully or partially funded by government funds would go a long way in combating veteran homelessness.

Shirley Surgeon, Council President, City of Hartford: Ms. Surgeon expressed her support of this bill and emphasized the importance of protecting veterans housing access right now given the rising cost of housing.

Michael Morneault, Vietnam Veterans of America: Mr. Morneault noted how wonderful the bill would be for disabled and elderly veterans.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Hugh Bailey, Policy Director, Open Communities Alliance: Mr. Bailey acknowledged the severity of the housing crisis in Connecticut, but he argued that adjusting 8-30g to favor one group over another is unsustainable. He also mentioned that linking the units to personal characteristics may prove hard to implement.

Alysha Gardner, Senior Policy Analyst, Partnership for Strong Communities: Ms. Gardner argued that while the bill is well-intentioned, it will not increase the stock of affordable housing for veterans and will benefit towns with low levels of affordable housing. She also pointed out that granting points for deed-restrictions on occupant characteristics is incompatible with the current 8-30g statute.

Raphael Podolsky, Connecticut Legal Services, Policy Advocate: Mr. Podolsky said that while his organization does not object to veterans' preferences in housing, this bill is not the appropriate legislation. Given that the bill requires no long-term provisions to ensure that a disabled veterans unit remains in the hands of a disabled or elderly veteran, he points out that the bill could be used to skirt affordable housing requirements.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Allison Weir, Executive Director, CT Veterans Legal Center: Ms. Weir explained that finding affordable housing for veterans is a big priority in her organization, and designating certain housing units as veterans housing could help foster veteran communities. Despite this though, she mentioned that the bill seems like a way for towns to get more points towards an 8-30g moratorium and was reluctant to support any legislation that could dilute the stock of affordable housing.

Reported by: Sam Sims

Date: 2/21/2025