PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES

Partnership for Strong Communities promotes equitable change in Connecticut housing policy by coordinating advocacy, advancing research, and uniting diverse partners.

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE
CHELSEA ROSS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES
FEBRUARY 21, 2025

H.B. 6864 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2027, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Senator Osten, Representative Walter, Senator Hartley, Senator Kushner, Representative Exum, Representative Paris, Senator Somers, Representative Nuccio, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on **H.B. 6864** – An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2027, and Making Appropriations Therefor. I am Chelsea Ross, Executive Director at the Partnership for Strong Communities. We are a statewide nonprofit research, policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring everyone in Connecticut has a safe, stable home that is affordable to them in an equitable community of their choice.

In addition to preserving $28.3 million for FY 2026- FY 2027 in the Governor's biennium budget for the DMHAS Housing Supports and Services line item, we ask you to expand funding to better meet the needs of people in our state who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

We ask you to make an additional investment in the DMHAS Housing Supports and Services Line Item of $6.2M annually for case management services in supportive housing.

Supportive Housing is a combination of affordable housing (via rental assistance or other subsidy) and supportive services designed to help vulnerable individuals and families use stable housing as a platform for health, recovery, and personal growth.

$6.2M annually would provide critical supportive housing services to approximately 650 households with persistent obstacles to maintaining housing stability in both scattered-site and development rental units. Due to inadequate funding, there is a gap in housing stabilization supports and wraparound services that keep highly vulnerable people stable in their housing and improve their social determinants of health.

In 2020, roughly 5,300 households were served in supportive housing. 62.3% of these folks maintained or increased their income. Only 2% of these households returned to homelessness[4]. Supportive housing continues to be one of the most effective housing models and has been proven to cut public system costs by up to 79%[1], and a CT demonstration showed a cost reduction of $7,800 per person per year[5]. With the average cost of supportive services at $9,500 per person, supportive housing not only leads to better outcomes for the individual or family served but typically results in cost savings to the state.

This funding, along with the $58.6 million in Opioid Settlement funds allocated to create 500 new units of supportive housing over four years for individuals with opioid use disorders who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, would significantly impact the lives of over 1,000 of our most vulnerable residents.

Connecticut is facing an unprecedented rise in homelessness. Since 2023, the number of people experiencing homelessness has increased by 13%[2], with children and older adults (55+) making up 44% of that increase. Right now, more than 5,000 people in our state are without a home, and over 900 are living unsheltered—sleeping in tents, outdoors, or in places not meant for human habitation. [3] More than 10% of those seeking substance use or mental health treatment in Connecticut's public health system are also experiencing homelessness, highlighting the deep connection between housing instability and health[4].

I ask you to consider investing in supportive housing to ensure that Connecticut's most vulnerable residents have access to the stable, affordable housing they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Chelsea Ross
Executive Director
Partnership for Strong Communities

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[1] Corporation for Supportive Housing Fact Sheet "FAQ – Is Supportive Housing Cost Effective?"
[2] PIT Count, 2021-23
[3] By Name List
[4] National Alliance to End Homelessness (January 2025) https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/health/