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 HOUSING COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES
THURSDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2025

Representative Felipe, Senator Marx, Representative Scott, Senator Sampson and distinguished members of the Housing Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. I am Sean Ghio, Policy Director with 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.

We respectfully request that the committee oppose **H.B. 5365 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN EXEMPTION FROM THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING APPEALS PROCEDURE FOR A MUNICIPALITY THAT CONTAINS AN AQUIFER PROTECTION AREA.**

This bill is not about protecting aquifers. Rather, it is about exempting towns from their responsibilities under the Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure (Section 8-30g), even though the towns fail to meet the exemption standard. It is difficult to understand why the bill singles out affordable housing developments as singularly dangerous to our water supply while excluding other types of housing including market-rate multi-family and single-family developments. Section 8-30g applies to both types of housing developments. Single-family developments can be and have been Section 8-30g developments.

What makes an affordable housing development, whether single-family detached homes or multi-family homes, a greater danger to our water supply than the same development without affordability restrictions?

The bill exempts whole towns from Section 8-30g if any part of the town is an aquifer protection area. It would exempt nearly half of Connecticut towns without them making any effort to meet long-term affordable housing needs; truly a blunt, one-size-fits-all approach.

Section 8-30g already provides protections for aquifers. The law allows developers of housing with long-term affordability protections to challenge zoning decisions, but the town can prevail

under Section 8-30g if the zoning commission's rejection of a proposal is "necessary to protect substantial public interests in health, safety or other matters which the commission may legally consider." Aquifer protection is one of those interests. When towns show substantial reasons for the denial of an application, they win Section 8-30g challenges in almost one-third of the cases.

Please deny this flawed bill.