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
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H.B. 6889 - AN ACT CONCERNING EVICTIONS FOR CAUSE

Representative Felipe, Senator Marx, Representative Scott, Senator Sampson and distinguished members of the Housing Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on **H.B. 6889 - AN ACT CONCERNING EVICTIONS FOR CAUSE.** I am Sean Ghio, Polic 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.

The Governor has stated that Connecticut's "north stars are affordability and opportunity" as we headed into this legislative session. As we look to support that vision for the state, **we respectfully request that the Housing Committee support H.B. 6889**. This bill will extend just cause protections to all renters (except in owner-occupied 1-4 units).

Connecticut's rental market is out of balance, and low-income renters are bearing the cost. Over the course of the last year, you have heard from hundreds of renters sharing stories which demonstrate how unhealthy and unbalanced our housing system has become. It is in these circumstances that we rightly look to the state to protect renters and ensure a stable rental market.

Rents have increased 29% since 2021[1] resulting in people being evicted at rates higher than pre-pandemic averages. No-fault evictions nearly doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to make up around 11% of eviction filings.[2] While there are likely many more families at

[1] Apartment List, Historic Rent Estimates, February 14, 2025. https://www.apartmentlist.com/research/category/data-rent-estimates

[2] Ginny Monk, "No-cause Evictions in CT More than Doubled During the Pandemic," CT Mirror, March 2022, available at: https://ctmirror.org/2022/03/30/no-cause-evictions-in-ct-more-than-doubled-during-the-pandemic/; CT Fair Housing Center analysis of Judicial Branch data for 2023.

risk of experiencing a no-cause eviction, most renters faced with the threat of eviction choose to leave voluntarily rather than endure the eviction process, even if the eviction is retaliatory.

Most Connecticut renters have no protection against no-fault evictions. Tenants with month-to-month leases can be evicted with only 30 days' notice – leaving no time to find replacement housing. Evictions have traumatic and lasting effects on families. Evictions worsen housing security, increase homelessness, and make our communities less stable, cohesive, and safe.

To add to the challenges renters face, renter income has not increased at the same pace as skyrocketing rents, putting low-income renters at a distinct disadvantage and at high risk of housing instability, eviction, and homelessness. Research demonstrates that once median rent surpasses 30% of an area's median income, the rate of homelessness begins to increase more rapidly. Fairfield County has already surpassed that threshold with median rent costing 32% of median income.[3] 52% of CT renters are housing cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their gross monthly income on rent.

Expanding Just Cause protections are a critical support for families with young children. **Forty-six percent** of clients that have participated in Connecticut's Right to Counsel program, which provides free legal representation to eligible tenants facing eviction, **have young children in their home**.[4] The Eviction Lab has shown that children are the demographic portion of our population most at risk of experiencing an eviction, specifically Black children.[5]

Research has extensively documented the widespread detrimental effects of eviction on young children. Experiencing eviction during early childhood is strongly linked to increased likelihood of future housing instability and poverty in adulthood. The negative effects of eviction in early life can persist in adulthood, contributing to cycles of poverty and disadvantage.[6]

Further research has shown that the effects eviction has on young children are widespread:

[3] County level median rent figures taken from https://www.zillow.com/research/data/. Median income figures from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/fairfieldcountyconnecticut,CT/PST045221
[4] From email with CT Fair Housing Center.
[5] https://evictionlab.org/who-is-evicted-in-america/
[6] https://www.newamerica.org/better-life-lab/articles/eviction-health-risks-black-children

1. **Health Impacts:** Children who experience evictions are at higher risk for neurodevelopmental issues and other health problems.[7]
2. **Emotional and Behavioral Effects:** Eviction can lead to increased anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems in young children.[8]
3. **Educational Disruptions:** Eviction orders increase the likelihood of school changes and absences, and lower academic performance.[9]
4. **Parental Stress and Family Instability:** Eviction exacerbates parental stress, affecting their ability to provide stable and responsive caregiving. These studies underscore the critical need for policies and interventions aimed at preventing eviction to protect the well-being and development of young children.[10]

These findings highlight the urgent need for eviction prevention policies, rental assistance programs, and stronger tenant protections to safeguard the well-being of young children and break the cycle of housing instability.

Just cause protections are critical and should be implemented alongside other policies and investments to improve housing stability, safety, and affordability for renters. We still need to build thousands more homes. We need additional investments in rental assistance. We need significant zoning reform. But families that rent their home will not have the housing stability that is their right without further tenant protections, including expanded just cause eviction protections.

Together, we can confront our housing crisis head-on to bridge the gap between unaffordability and opportunity and to ensure that no one is left behind. Expanded just cause eviction protections is a necessary start.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

[7] https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10091158/
[8] https://hms.harvard.edu/news/evictions-haunt-families-harm-childrens-health
[9] https://harris.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/Tannenbaum%20PPE%20seminar%20abstract%2010-22-24.pdf
[10] https://petrieflom.law.harvard.edu/2022/11/02/pandemic-eviction-policy-children