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 ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES
MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025

Senator Lopes, Representative Parker, Senator Harding, Representative Callahan, and distinguished members of the Environmental Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. I am Alysha Gardner, Senior Policy Analyst 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 **HB 5749 – AN ACT CONCERNING ADVANCED SEPTIC SYSTEMS WITH NITROGEN-REMOVAL FEATURES.**

We support policies that protect Connecticut's environment and believe that all Connecticut residents, particularly members of historically marginalized communities, should have access to clean air, water, and open space. **Given the ongoing and severe housing crisis in Connecticut, we believe it is incumbent upon state leaders to appropriately weigh the benefits of additional regulation with the costs they impose on housing construction and affordability.**

The most recent reports on housing cost burden in Connecticut show that the current housing situation is untenable for a growing share of Connecticut families:

- 3 in every 4 extremely low-income CT households (with incomes at or below 30% of the Area Median Income) spend more than 50% of their income on housing costs;
- 1 in every 3 low-income CT households (with incomes between 30-50% AMI) spend more than 50% of their income on housing costs.
- Together, these groups represent **over 150,000 CT families spending over half of their income on housing.**

This bill mandates the implementation of costly nitrogen-reducing septic systems, which represent a threefold increase over traditional septic systems ($15-$35K cost per unit versus $5-$10K, according to recent EPA estimates). **This mandate, as written, would definitively increase the**

cost to construct new housing units without a clear assessment of its benefit to pollution-reduction efforts in the state.

We urge members of the committee to consider alternative policy solutions to develop targeted nitrogen-reducing strategies that balance the need to minimize construction costs for needed housing in the state. Some considerations could include:

- **Supporting HB 7247, "An Act Concerning Sewage Disposal Requirement and Their Impact on Housing Development, Public Health and the Environment,"** which creates a working group made up of representatives from the Departments of Public Health, Energy and Environmental Protection, and Housing, as well as subject matter experts, to "provide recommendations on nitrogen discharge limits and their impact on the development of housing, public health and the environment."
- Supporting property owners in other low-tech nitrogen-reducing techniques, such as landscape maintenance, that may accomplish similar goals without the need for costly septic systems.
- Supporting the Department of Public Health's existing nitrogen-reducing septic systems program, which is currently under development, to develop regulations, education, and incentives for property owners.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Alysha Gardner
Senior Policy Analyst
Partnership for Strong Communities