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 PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
SEAN GHIO, POLICY DIRECTOR
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES
FEBRUARY 28, 2025

H.B. 6996 – AN ACT CONCERNING PROTESTED CHANGES TO MUNICIPAL ZONING REGULATIONS.

Senator Rahman, Representative Kavros DeGraw, Senator Gordon, Representative Zullo, Representative Chafee, Senator Needleman and distinguished members of the Planning & Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 6996 I am Sean Ghio, Policy Director with the Partnership for Strong Communities – 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 support H.B. 6996, which amends § 8-3(b) to raise the threshold for a valid zoning change protest from 20% to 50% of neighboring property owners. This change preserves the local zoning commission's authority, prevents a small minority of property owners from disproportionately influencing land use decisions, while still allowing property owners to protest zoning changes.

Current law enables a small group to force a supermajority vote on zoning changes. Raising the threshold ensures these decisions require only a simple majority, promoting transparency and preserving public input from the broader community.

A 2023 case in South Windsor highlights the issue. A developer proposed fifty-five apartments, reserving 15 percent for people with disabilities. With a local moratorium on § 8-30g, the developer sought rezoning. A protest petition narrowly missed the 20 percent ownership requirement, allowing the commission to approve the change by a 4-3 vote. Had the petition been valid, the proposal would have failed without a five-vote supermajority.

Thank you for considering this testimony.