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
FEBRUARY 24, 2026

Senator Marx, Representative Felipe, Senator Sampson, Representative Scott, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on several bills being heard by the committee 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 support the following bills:

H.B. 5092 AN ACT PROTECTING RENTERS FROM RENT INCREASES UPON THE TRANSFER OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY.

We support the intent of H.B. 5092 to stabilize rents for tenants through a targeted and limited measure at the time that property ownership changes. As drafted, the bill would apply in municipalities required to have a Fair Rent Commission. Current law requires municipalities with populations greater than 15,000 to form a FRC or to join a regional FRC. This excludes renters in more than half of Connecticut's towns. **H.B. 5092 should be amended to protect renters in every municipality.** Unless universal access to Fair Rent Commissions is legislated, another system must be found to manage this rent stabilization effort.

H.B. 5260 AN ACT PROHIBITING A MUNICIPALITY FROM IMPOSING A PENALTY FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF CERTAIN ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING.

On June 28, 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Johnson vs. Grants Pass that it is permissible for communities to ticket, fine, and arrest people experiencing homelessness for sleeping outside, even when there are no safe alternatives. While other statehouses across the county are considering harmful bills criminalizing homelessness, Connecticut has the opportunity to be different. The Connecticut General Assembly must pass legislation codifying protections for

people experiencing homelessness in state law and affirming our commitment to humane, effective, rational approaches.

Since 2021, homelessness has increased 44%. In the past year alone, unsheltered homelessness rose 45%, and there are 45% more people living outside across communities in every ZIP code—rural, suburban, and urban alike[1]. In particular, this year has been brutally cold for days and sometimes weeks at a time. With shelters already at or beyond max capacity providing warming centers during these times, it is imperative that we look upstream to better prevent folks falling into homelessness in the first place. When the only place people experiencing homelessness can afford live in is their cars, in a tent, or under a bridge, we are leaving them at increased risk of facing life threatening or even fatal conditions without other alternatives for safety or care.

In supporting this bill, our legislature reaffirms Connecticut's commitment to human dignity and practical solutions that do not criminalize people for experiencing homelessness or housing instability. It will take a multifaceted set of investments and protections to ensure our most vulnerable residents are safely and stably housed. When we support the needs of our lowest-income residents, we uplift the standard of living for everyone in our state. Through investments in our homeless crisis response system and affordable housing initiatives, we can move towards long-term solutions that provide stability and support for individuals and families experiencing housing insecurity.

HB 5230: AN ACT EXEMPTING INCOME OF UP TO ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS EARNED BY A CHILD UNDER THE AGE OF TWENTY-FOUR FROM INCLUSION IN THE PARENT'S GROSS INCOME FOR DETERMINATION OF THE PARENT'S ELIGIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

We respectfully request that the Committee support exempting income earned by young adults from asset determinations for vouchers in the state Rental Assistance Program (RAP). While earned income of youth under 18 may not be counted toward household assets for benefit determination purposes, income of young adults over 18 is part of eligibility determination for housing vouchers. We have submitted a FOIA request for 2025 data, however, the most recent

data we have on this specific population is from 2021. At the end of 2021, there were 412 employed, non-heads of household or other adults, between the ages of 18 and 24, living in households with RAP vouchers. At that time, the **average annual earning** of those young adults **was $9,500**. While this is not a significant income, it nonetheless contributes to overall household income. Households with young adults often rely on them to contribute to their own essentials like transportation, school costs or phone bills. In lower income earning households, young adults contribute financially out of necessity and though minimal, these contributions can strengthen overall household financial stability and reduce challenges like food insecurity that can require additional costly crisis interventions.

Permitting an income waiver for youth ages 18–24 would prevent minimal earnings from triggering unintended benefit losses. Under current voucher rules, even small income increases can push a household over eligibility limits, creating a "benefit cliff" — a sudden loss of public assistance that far exceeds the value of the wage gain. These modest earnings are rarely enough to make a family self-sufficient, yet they can jeopardize critical supports like a housing voucher. When families risk losing stable housing because a young adult takes a part-time job or receives a small raise, the policy discourages work, skill-building, and career advancement. Over time, this dynamic reinforces poverty rather than promoting economic mobility.

Supporting a policy that would create an income disregard for earnings of employed, young adults, aged 18 to 24, in critical stages of developing professional skills and experience, would allow certain RAP voucher households to maintain both a stable housing situation as well as contribute to economic mobility. Exempting the income of young workers ensures these households can still qualify for critical housing assistance, while encouraging career development and financial independence, decreasing long term dependability on vouchers. When young adults and their households know that taking a part-time or entry level job won't reduce their family's benefits, they are more likely to enter the workforce earlier, build in-demand skills with work history and increase their long-term earning potential. An income waiver for young adults in RAP households benefits the state's workforce development goals, promotes economic mobility, avoids disconnected and opportunity youth and reduces reliance on public assistance.

According to the 2021 data from the CT Department of Housing, the state would only need an additional $1,565,600 in RAP funds to support an income waiver for this population (412 people

x $9,500 earned/year = $3,914,000 x 0.4[1] = $1,565,600). Exempting earned income of working youth, age 18-24 is smart policy with minimal investment that overtime would certainly be returned to the state economy.

H.B. 5258 AN ACT CONCERNING TENANT ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

We support H.B. 5258, which empowers tenants to organize for improved living conditions and protects them from landlord retaliation for engaging in these collective activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sean Ghio
Policy Director

[1] The 0.4 is the 40% of income that the tenant must pay.