TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSING COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES
FEBRUARY 24, 2026

SUPPORT H.B. 5261 – AN ACT PERMITTING MUNICIPALITIES TO PROHIBIT RENT INCREASES IN THE EVENT OF MULTIPLE STATE BUILDING CODE VIOLATIONS

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. 5261, *"An Act Permitting Municipalities to Prohibit Rent Increases in the Event of Multiple State Building Code Violations."* 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 support H.B. 5261 – AN ACT PERMITTING MUNICIPALITIES TO PROHIBIT RENT INCREASES IN THE EVENT OF MULTIPLE STATE BUILDING CODE VIOLATIONS.

H.B. 5261 is a practical, targeted bill that supports housing stability by providing new optional enforcement mechanisms for existing health and public safety laws. On average, Connecticut's rental housing stock is older than the rest of the county. From the CT Housing Finance Authority's Housing Needs Assessment:

> *"Connecticut has the sixth oldest housing of any state (including Washington DC) with a median year built of 1966 compared to 1979 for the rest of the country… The median age of Connecticut's housing stock according to 2023 Five Year ACS estimates is 58 years old, compared to 45 years nationwide." (CHFA 2023)*

In fact, over half (54%) of all housing units in Connecticut are more than 50 years old, and 20% were built before 1939, compared to 34% and 11%, respectively, for the nation. When not properly maintained, aging housing stock frequently leads to unsafe conditions, including mold, leaky pipes, unsafe electrical wiring, doors and windows that will not close, and rodent infestations.

In our conversations with local commissioners, we have repeatedly heard that a common driver of Fair Rent Commission complaints are not only rental increases themselves, but also safety violations. In many cases, Fair Rent Commissions have become **a last resort to pursue solutions**

for health and safety violations and unlivable conditions. While FRCs can issue rulings, they have limited enforcement mechanisms and their rulings are not always consistent across complaints.

H.B. 5261 creates a uniform standard: if a landlord has at least two outstanding violations of either the State Building Code or a municipal health and safety ordinance, they cannot raise the rent until those violations are corrected. This bill does not change existing property ownership laws, which are already followed by responsible property owners. Rather, **this bill creates a concrete, remediation-focused penalty for bad actors who seek to increase rent while failing to maintain safe conditions.**

As a municipal opt-in, this bill also allows larger, better-staffed municipalities to experiment with local enforcement and learn what works in their specific communities. This approach respects local context while establishing a clear and consistent threshold for what constitutes a violation. Most importantly, it provides protections for tenants who cannot undertake property repairs themselves, but who deserve to live in safe conditions.

We urge the committee to support H.B. 5261 as an important tool for tenant stability and municipal public health and safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

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