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
TUESDAY MARCH 3, 2026

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. 5367, and Senate Bills 333 and 337. I am Amy Peltier, Coalition and Advocacy 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 oppose the following bills:**

- **H.B. No. 5367** (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE REMOVAL OF UNAUTHORIZED PERSONS FROM RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY. REAL PROPERTY – **OPPOSE**
- **S.B. No. 333**: AN ACT DEFINING ADVANCE RENTAL PAYMENTS - **OPPOSE**
- **S.B. No. 337** (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROPERTY OF EVICTED TENANTS - **OPPOSE**

H.B. No. 5367 AN ACT PERMITTING REMOVAL OF AN UNAUTHORIZED INDIVIDUAL FROM REAL PROPERTY. OPPOSE

Over the past decade, housing costs have significantly outpaced wages both in Connecticut and across the U.S. contributing significantly to housing instability[1]. With extremely low vacancy rates and rising rents, tenants are often at a disadvantage in the landlord-tenant relationship. It is logical to conclude that increasing a landlord's ability to remove people from their homes and communities, outside the legal eviction process by using police force, will only exacerbate these issues further.

This bill threatens to undermine existing tenant protections that include due process and other legal rights that minimize displacement and act as the backbone for resolutions to landlord-tenant disputes. Without a court-ordered notice, eviction or removal finding, there will be increased tension between the tenant community and their local law enforcement officers. Police may have

[1] https://ctdatahaven.org/new-data-reveals-worsening-financial-food-and-housing-insecurity-connecticut/

no other grounds for removing an individual other than an owner's word that an occupant can't be there.

In some cases, it is reasonable to believe that the authorities may refuse to enforce the owner's removal request rather than create a highly volatile situation where the parties must navigate threats and potential use of force. In other cases, tenants can look to the courts for assistance when a landlord is trying to bypass the legal eviction or criminal justice systems already in place. Occupants may have grounds for wrongful eviction or harassment cases against landlords for removal without formal process. Once there is a case pending for a potential "self-help" eviction, which are illegal in CT, tenant removal is further delayed, and the process has backfired on the owner who could be the one paying fines or even facing criminal charges. Additionally, if the occupant had any claims to even temporary accommodation at the location, there may be further legal challenges to remaining possessions as well as the inability of a removed person, claiming a right to remain, to find alternative shelter upon such short notice. Depending on what claims a real property owner makes to have the individual removed, potential false claims may impact the tenant securing accommodation or stable housing in the future.

A landowner or landlord's reputation can also be damaged by engaging in what can be viewed as self-help evictions. This can make it difficult to find quality tenants in the future and potentially harm relationships with surrounding property owners. This long-term perspective underscores the importance of following the legal eviction process already in place, not only for immediate financial and legal reasons, but also for the sustainability and reputation of any real estate or rental business.

We cannot legitimize this behavior. Eviction and trespass laws already exist, are decided by a neutral party – a judge - and are firmly understood to govern behaviors this bill is attempting to address. Our current eviction system provides an orderly mechanism for removing tenants who no longer have a right to occupy - including those who the tenant admitted but the landlord did not admit. It is a dangerous precedent to allow select removal of individuals from spaces without formalized legal guidance that assigns all parties delineated rights and retributions.

S.B. No. 337 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROPERTY OF EVICTED TENANTS - <u>OPPOSE</u>

Currently, municipalities play a critical role in the last stages of the eviction process by holding the possessions of evicted tenants for at least 15 days when necessary, so that tenants have a chance to retrieve them. The existing statute addresses the public health, safety, and welfare responsibility of towns that dates to at least 1895, when it was originally adopted. It is a way of

keeping a buffer between landlords and tenants and a way of preventing personal confrontations that are likely to be volatile or potentially violent. The entire eviction process – from notice to quit and service of court papers by a marshal, to process, mediation, and decision by a judge in court, to carrying out the eviction by a marshal -– - is designed to prevent direct confrontation between landlord and tenant. The point of "execution" of an eviction (physically evicting the tenant) is to remove the tenant and his or her property. It is not to take away all the tenant's possessions. In most cases, landlords are likely to throw property away immediately or to refuse to return it, even on demand, which this bill mandates in writing. Direct confrontation between landlord and tenant is dangerous and creates public safety risks. In practice, leaving the tenant's property in the landlord's control is very likely to result in its permanent loss to the tenant. The current statute, a compromise that delicately balances the interests of tenants, landlords, and municipalities, should be left as it is.

The existing law also protects the most vulnerable tenants. CT Legal Services estimates that in 10% to 15% of all eviction cases -- a marshal must remove the tenant or tenant possessions. These are often the saddest cases -- tenants with little understanding of the process, no place to go, no place to store property, and no way to move it. The municipality is the best entity to deal with this situation. It is neutral. It has an interest that its residents are not stripped of all their possessions. It may offer resources or assistance for help with a voluntary move that avoids an eviction by the marshal, saving cost to the landlord and the town and reducing hardship for the tenant. Keeping towns as the neutral party between tenant and landlord avoids the high risk that landlords could be exposed to liability for damages to property inventory and conditions and any accusations of harassment if personal property of a tenant is held to satisfy debt or any other reason.

Finally, tenant possessions, simply because they may be immediately left behind at an eviction, are not necessarily "junk." Some property, from photograph albums to personal papers and medication, is irreplaceable. Some property may be of substantial value. In fact, CT Legal Aid states a significant minority of cases result in redemptions to tenants. This bill, which would remove towns from the process, will leave tenants at the mercy of landlords and in practice often result in the loss of every possession they own. The statute should NOT be changed.

S.B. No. 333: AN ACT DEFINING ADVANCE RENTAL PAYMENTS - <u>OPPOSE</u>

Senate Bill 333 refers to an "advance rental payment" as a payment of any amount, up to the remaining amount owed on the lease term, intended to serve as partial or full payment of rent that is not yet due, but does not include a security deposit." Advanced rent payments can be considered detrimental to the housing market because they can severely limit accessibility, exacerbate income inequality, and serve to artificially fuel rental prices. In Connecticut, the majority of renters are already required to pay two months' rent upfront (their rent and a security deposit) despite rising monthly costs. By defining a new set of payment options for renters, such as advanced rental payments, there is significant risk that established security deposit rules may be curtailed, and moderate- and low-income earning renters may be further excluded from the rental market. Renters who may lack savings or traditional financial credentials do not need additional hurdles.

The current Connecticut median renter household monthly income is $4,300 while the median monthly rent is $1,500 (U.S. Census Bureau 2024). With security deposits and rent, **the average renter family in Connecticut already pays almost 10% of their total annual income simply to move into a new apartment[2].** Creating a market where those who have can pay upfront advance rents while those that do not have, cannot pay upfront rent, will only further compound inequities. Most immediately, this system will lock low- and fixed-income individuals and families either out of the rental market or into predatory and high-interest financial agreements to secure housing. Or those unable to find affordable rental options could be forced to choose poorly constructed or overcrowded housing options.

In 2024, the US Department of Justice sued RealPage Inc., one of the nation's largest landlords for their use of algorithmic tools to inflate rent prices artificially. That lawsuit, which CT joined with six additional states, argued that RealPage Inc. and its massive real estate companies, among other things, suppressed competition in the multi-family housing markets of 43 different states. That lawsuit highlights how our housing market became entangled with our financial system. The underlying effects of that entanglement can lead to manipulative coordination that will prevent a typical renter from being able to save for and afford a rental unit, much less strive for economic mobility along the housing continuum and purchase a home. Rents that become artificially high, because of having to compete with "advance rental payments" in addition to security deposits, will similarly drive displacement and fuel rental price inflation. RealPage acknowledged its software and recommendations to landlords were aimed at maximizing prices for landlords and convinced

[2] U.S. Census Bureau. 2024. "S2503 Financial Characteristics." *American Community Survey 2024 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables.* https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2024.S2503?q=housing+connecticut&moe=false *(accessed February 23, 2026).*

landlords the process would create "a rising tide [that] raises all ships."[3] It is not unreasonable to see how that could occur by allowing informal "advance rent payment" options.

Much like those made against security deposit caps, a common argument in support of allowing advance rental fees might come from landlord warnings that even more selective criteria will be used to select tenants. However, there is no empirical evidence to suggest that deposit caps lead to reduced access, tighter screenings, or landlord exits from the market. In fact, the current literature from the National Bureau of Economic Research (Humphries et al 2025) suggests that landlords typically do not tighten screening criteria after stronger tenant protections are passed into law. Income and credit scores are highly correlated to these criteria and rental outcomes are not likely to change under differing advance fees and deposit amounts. Any financial safety net for landlords allowing advance rental payments this creates is far outweighed by the systemic negative impacts on the housing market.

Thank you and please feel free to contact me with any questions.
Respectfully submitted,

Amy Peltier

[3] https://portal.ct.gov/ag/press-releases/2024-press-releases/attorney-general-tong-joins-lawsuit-against-realpage-inc-for-alleged-antitrust-violations. (accessed March 2, 2026)