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 GENERAL COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES
FEBRUARY 23, 2026

SUPPORT H.B. 5226: AN ACT CONCERNING MOBILE MANUFACTURED HOMES AND MOBILE MANUFACTURED HOME PARKS.

Senator Maroney, Representative Lemar, Senator Ciccarella, Representative Rutigliano, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of H.B. 5226**. I am Amy Peltier, Coalition and Advocacy Director at 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 support this bill because it addresses two key issues. First, it ensures that residents of mobile home parks in towns with fewer than 15,000 residents have access to fair rent commissions. Second, it removes a major barrier that currently prevents mobile home park residents from exercising their right to purchase the park when it is offered for sale by the owner.

We support the comments and suggested modifications offered in testimony submitted by Attorney Raphael Podolsky. Mobile home park residents in towns without a fair rent commission should be able to file complaints with a COG-run Fair Rent Commission, ensuring statewide access to FRCs. Residents in towns that already have a municipal FRC may continue using their local commission but should also have the option to file with the COG FRC if they prefer. The committee should also consider the option of the state operating one statewide mobile-home-specific FRC which would reduce the administrative burden on COGs.

Background Information on Mobile Home Parks and Fair Rent Commissions

Mobile home park residents are uniquely vulnerable because, although they own their homes, they rent the land beneath them and cannot easily relocate. Moving a manufactured home is often prohibitively expensive or not feasible, leaving residents exposed to rent increases and fees they cannot absorb.

Fair Rent Commissions (FRCs) provide a critical safeguard by giving tenants a forum to challenge excessive or unfair rent increases. In towns over 15,000 residents, municipalities may establish an FRC, which operates as a quasi-judicial body that holds hearings, issues binding decisions, and enforces local housing standards. Yet only one-third of Connecticut municipalities currently operate such commissions, leaving about 75,000 renter households—including many mobile home residents—without access to this protection.

Since Connecticut's Fair Rent Commission Act of 1969 authorized municipalities to establish local commissions by ordinance, it is the local municipal commissions "staffed" by town employees and resident volunteer commissioners that have been vital to addressing excessive rent increases and supporting housing code enforcement. Commissions established by municipalities or smaller joint commissions are more likely to have the critical experience and understanding of local housing choices, stability and affordability concerns when considering the thirteen factors C.G.S. 7-148c mandates Commissions address when determining whether a rent increase is "so excessive as to be harsh and unconscionable".

FRCs have existed in Connecticut in various forms for nearly a century. Hartford established one of the first local commissions in 1955, followed by New Haven and Stamford soon after. Activity fluctuated over time, with many commissions becoming inactive by the early 2000s as rents remained relatively stable. Fair Rent Commissions reemerged as rents rose sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic, driven by limited supply, high demand, and out-of-state investment in multifamily properties.

FRCs function as a form of rent stabilization, ensuring that rent increases are not excessive, and that tenants are protected from unfair practices. Each local rent commission ordinance must adopt the Connecticut Fair Rent Commission Act, but towns can add their own provisions to clarify procedures or define the scope of commission authority.

Most commissions include five to seven volunteer members appointed by the local legislative body or municipal executive. Membership is governed by the Minority Representation Act, which limits how many members may belong to the same political party. Many commissions also reserve at least one seat each for a tenant and a landlord to ensure balanced representation. Commissioners serve without pay, and most towns rely on existing municipal staff for administrative and legal support. When Fair Rent Commissions are active and accessible, they

serve as the conscience of the community, ordinary residents weighing what is fair and equitable for both tenants and landlords.

In 2025, Connecticut marked an important milestone in its commitment to housing fairness with the launch of the statewide Network of Fair Rent Commissions, the first of its kind in the nation. The Network emerged through collaboration among the New Haven Fair Rent Commission, the Connecticut Department of Housing, and the Partnership for Strong Communities to meet the growing need for coordination and shared learning among local commissions.

Chaired by municipal staff who also serve as commissioners, the Network functions as a hub for training (a recent mediation training included more than a dozen different FRCs), capacity building, and collaboration. The Network convenes monthly meetings where local commissions across the state exchange best practices, consult with housing attorneys and policy experts, and address emerging challenges. Subcommittees focus on legislative priorities, mediation and training, and data collection. The Network has also launched a statewide data initiative to establish common metrics and strengthen the evidence base for fair rent enforcement.

Fair Rent Commissions are a vital tool for addressing excessive rent increases and supporting housing code enforcement. When paired with other tenant protection policies— such as Just Cause eviction protections or Right to Counsel programs, FRCs provide neutral, accessible forums for resolving rent disputes and keeping residents stably housed in tight rental markets. Increasing access to and capacity of Fair Rent Commissions (FRCs) can further strengthen tenant protections.

To make fair rent protections consistent and effective statewide, Connecticut should ensure that whether it is a municipality or regional Council of Governments (COG) that decides to form an FRC, technical assistance, administrative support, and mediation training are made available. Standardized data collection must also be sustained so that effective landlord–tenant practices can be replicated, harmful ones corrected, and fairness upheld consistently across municipalities. Expanding regional collaboration through the Connecticut Fair Rent Commission Network can also help ensure consistency, improve data collection, and provide training and administrative support to municipalities. Together, these efforts can transform Connecticut's patchwork of local commissions into a coordinated system that better protects tenants, supports landlords, and

strengthens housing policy statewide, positioning Connecticut as a national model for fair rent governance.

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