



*Creating Great Communities For All*

## **Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association**

Testimony regarding  
**Proposed Bill No. 5008— AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HIGH  
PERFORMANCE GREEN BUILDING STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTARY ADOPTION BY  
MUNICIPALITIES**

CCAPA has significant concerns with this bill as written. The bill would enable municipalities to adopt a “stretch” building construction standard for residential and commercial construction based on codes developed by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). While we strongly agree that the State and its constituent municipalities should be encouraging the wider use of “green” building materials and techniques, the approach of this bill is not the right solution. We fear that, given an opportunity to change local building codes to make construction more expensive (at least in the projectable future) while calling it an “environmentally-friendly” decision, many municipalities will use this as a way to raise the barriers to entry for middle- and lower-income residents in already deeply unaffordable communities. When Massachusetts passed similar enabling “stretch” building code legislation, many of the early adopters were high-end towns in the Boston suburbs.

If the State and its municipalities wish to promote both green building practices and continue a focus on affordable housing, a more appropriate approach would be to use a sustainability framework that seeks to consider policies that balance environmental sensitivity with social equity. Focusing on tax incentives and grants that promote the upgrading of systems in our aging existing building stock would do more to promote sustainable residential neighborhoods and buildings than ratcheting up building standards for new construction.

The realities of climate change demand that we take more action to mitigate our environmental impact. At the same time, our vast inventory of old buildings presents an ongoing public health hazard, particularly in our central cities. Finally, our communities must do more to increase access to quality housing. This bill addresses one of these in a partial way, while threatening the ability to deliver on the other goals. It is certainly appropriate to have higher standards for our buildings (both existing and new), but this higher standard must include consideration of social equity and equal access.

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### **WHO WE ARE**

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association (CCAPA) has over 420 members who are governmental and consulting planners, land use attorneys, citizen planners, and other professionals engaged in planning and managing land use, economic development, housing, transportation, and conservation for local, regional, and State governments, private businesses and other entities. CCAPA has