



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

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MARCH 5, 2020

TESTIMONY ON H.B. 5008: AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HIGH PERFORMANCE GREEN BUILDING STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTARY ADOPTION BY MUNICIPALITIES.

Senator Needleman, Representative Arconti, honorable ranking members and members of the committee, my name is Sean Ghio, and I am policy director at the Partnership for Strong Communities. We are a statewide nonprofit policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ending homelessness, expanding the creation of affordable housing, and building strong communities in Connecticut.

There is great value in building affordable housing to the highest energy standards. Connecticut's families pay unnecessarily high costs for heating and cooling as a result of our older housing stock. In addition, poor housing quality can result in unhealthy housing conditions such as mold. Increasing energy efficiency and green design can provide critical utility cost savings to low-income families already burdened by high housing costs across the state, as well as ensure families have access to healthier homes.

Further, we know that the effects of climate change disproportionately impact low-income families and people of color and their health. We acknowledge the value of making our housing more sustainable, and the disparate impact that failure to respond to climate change will have on low-income families across the state.

We do, however, respectfully ask the committee to give this bill further study. For municipalities that adopt higher energy standards in their building code, the cost of residential construction could increase, at least in the short term. Without knowing what the standards are, it is difficult to say how much construction costs will increase or how much long term operating costs might decrease as a result of greater energy efficiency. The process to develop any "stretch code" regulations should allow for an examination of potential increased construction costs and how the new code might offset increased costs through decreased operating costs.





Also, we are concerned that “stretch codes” may be adopted by some municipalities with the intent to (or may be later used to) create yet another barrier to affordable housing by making it more costly and thus less likely to be proposed by developers in their communities.

Recognizing the important policy goals of increasing energy efficiency and green design, we recommend this bill be revised to address and mitigate its use as a potential barrier to affordable housing development. Funding or other financial incentives to help affordable housing builders offset calculated costs not otherwise mitigated by energy savings should part of a conversation on adopting these enhanced building codes.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

