Testimony in support of HB 5592
An Act Concerning Incentives for Municipal Revitalization Projects

Dear Co-Chairs Senators Cassano and Logan, Representative Lemar; Ranking Member Representative Zawistowski; and members of the Planning and Development Committee.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue. My name is Brett Broesder, and I’m a co-founder and vice president at the Campaign for Tomorrow’s Jobs, which is a new non-profit advocacy organization that supports growing Connecticut’s economy for present and future generations. We engage policymakers, business leaders, advocates, entrepreneurs, and residents in seeking out ways to ensure Connecticut's wins the competition for tomorrow's jobs.

We support the intent of this legislation. Municipal revitalization projects can play a significant role in turning around – and growing – our state and local economy.

A vacant property causes approximately $150,000 in losses during its first year alone – $133,000 from reduced property values for neighboring properties, $14,000 in increased crime, and $1,500 in higher costs for local police and fire departments – according to a recently released study from Community Blight Solutions. Thankfully, there are steps that the state can take – or continue making – to incentivize municipalities to revitalize run-down and vacant properties. And, many of these steps do not require spending new, hard-to-find resources, according to a report from Brookings-Rockefeller, which include:

- Developing clear paths for localities to take public control of run-down and vacant properties while providing incentives to responsibly and expeditiously get it back on the tax rolls;
- Equip municipalities with active code enforcement tools and nuisance strategies;
- Mitigate the harm caused by foreclosures;
- And continue the state’s successful brownfield remediation program.

These are just a few examples of tools that can help transform properties, and in turn, communities in municipalities statewide. To be clear, as revitalization efforts continue – and as strengthening our state's urban centers remains vital to our state winning the competition for tomorrow's jobs – we must not keep suburbs from entering the equation since they stand to benefit from these efforts, too. In fact, a recent study from the University of California at Berkley found that state programs aimed at investing in revitalization projects in older suburbs nationwide can significantly improve a local economy, create jobs, and bolster the quality of life.
Municipal revitalization projects, especially those aimed at turning around run-down properties, can serve as the catalyst for the future economic success of a city or town. And, while seeing these projects through from start to finish is incumbent upon a respective locality, state government plays an instrumental role in determining whether municipalities have the right tools for the job.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Brett Broesder
Campaign for Tomorrow’s Jobs
Co-founder and Vice President