

February 17, 2021

To:
Chairpersons McGee and Lopes
Vice Chairs Smith and Anwar
Ranking Members Polletta and Cicarella
All respected members of the Joint Housing Committee

From: Charmain Yun, New Haven

Re: Testimony **IN SUPPORT of Affordable Housing**
in support of proposed bills:
HB No. 5911
HB No. 5685
SB No. 86

My name is Charmain Yun and I am a resident of New Haven. I am currently finishing up my MSW at UConn. I am also a member of Mothers and Others for Justice and work as the Coordinated Access Network (CAN) Landlord Engagement Specialist.

Twenty years ago, my husband and I purchased a home in New Haven—purposely going to the side of town where we could be living with people from New Haven. We got to know the families and kids and they became our community. However, rather than seeing these kids and families get pushed up for more opportunities, they instead got pushed out of the neighborhood. The rent prices made it impossible for them to stay.

As I work in the area of social services, I am seeing our dire need to be more deliberate in housing policies to make sure—as Governor Lamont said in his February budget priorities—we have a “more affordable Connecticut” and have “economic growth and an economy that works for ALL”.

I would like to primarily express my support for affordable housing, as expressed in HB No. 5911. In my current job as the CAN Landlord Engagement Specialist. I work with those experiencing homelessness or at risk of it and I join them in their search for housing. It is so hard for my clients—on a daily basis—to be going through apartment ad after apartment ad, and just know that they cannot afford the apartments that are listed. I have clients who are working 2 jobs. I have single mothers trying to make ends meet and they just cannot get approved for apartments either because of their income or background.

In one of the more low-income neighborhoods of New Haven, in order to affordably rent a 2-bedroom apartment, one would have to make \$27.31/hr, full time (*National Low Income Housing Coalition*). As you know, right now, minimum wage is \$12/hr.

\$27.31/hr. full time would be a monthly income of about \$4,369. A quick calculation of the average monthly income of my 50 clients is \$2,132. A big gap. These are clients who are primarily only receiving a housing subsidy for security deposit and first month's rent so they will

have to rely on their income for rent for the rest of the year. Either they won't get approved for an apartment or if they do, they will be severely rent burdened. Right now, 48% of households in the aforementioned low-income neighborhood in New Haven are severely rent burdened.

(The 50 clients that I refer to are an extremely small sample size of the thousands that the Greater New Haven Coordinated Access Network serves. Let me state that I also support SB No. 86.)

Lastly, there is also HB No. 5685, an act concerning rent control which I also support. I don't pretend to be an economist and I'm sure critics will give statistics on how rent control might negatively affect the market long term. But, **in the short term**, we have people who need housing but can't access it, we have people living in their cars (literally, tonight), and we have people separating their families because they cannot all stay in one place temporarily. So, somehow, we need some sort of mechanism that allows for the supply to meet the need.

Overall, I express my support to increase availability of low-income housing, as Proposed HB No. 5911 states.

Let me close with something my friend, one of the neighbors who couldn't stay in my neighborhood, said "I feel that it's a sad situation when people need housing and need the help....We were trying to survive and we got pushed out. We were happy where we were. We were just pushed out because we couldn't afford it".