

March 4, 2021

**RE: HB 6521: An Act Concerning Changes to Zoning and Affordable Housing Requirements Concerning Accessory Dwelling Units and Prohibiting List-Back Agreements**

Dear Co-Chairs Lopes and McGee, and Members of the Housing Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Melissa Kaplan-Macey and I am Vice President for State Programs and Connecticut Director for Regional Plan Association. Regional Plan Association is a research, planning and advocacy organization. For nearly 100 years RPA has been dedicated to developing and promoting ideas to improve the economic health, environmental resiliency and quality of life of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan area. In Connecticut, this metro region includes Fairfield, Litchfield and New Haven Counties. We have developed four, once in a generation, long-range plans, each addressing major issues of its time. Our [Fourth Regional Plan](#), released in 2017, identified the housing affordability crisis as one of the central challenges facing our region today.

**We strongly support allowing accessory dwelling units as of right in single family zones throughout Connecticut.**

In Connecticut today, 91% of the land area consists of single family zoning. ADUs are an innovative solution that work within the scale of single-family neighborhoods to expand housing options to meet the needs of individuals and families of different ages, incomes and stages of life.

As discussed in [RPA's Be My Neighbor report](#), released in July 2020, ADUs are a critical part of the strategy to create inclusive, thriving communities where younger and older people can live in smaller homes that meet their space and budget needs; families at a range of incomes can afford homes in places that are close to their jobs; and workers of all incomes can afford to live where they work. We have been encouraging ADUs as an innovative, low-impact solution that work within a neighborhood's scale to expand housing options for seniors, young adults and workers, and are encouraged to see the Housing Committee responding to this call to action. We can create more housing simply by allowing more flexibility within the context of existing single-family zones in all municipalities.

*While we applaud the Housing Committee for taking up the issue of enabling accessory dwelling units as of right, we want to highlight some concerns we have about some of the language in HB 6521.*

Specifically, we recommend that the requirement that there be an interior door between the primary unit and the accessory dwelling be removed, and that not more than one parking space be required per unit. Currently the legislation calls for "adequate parking to accommodate an accessory dwelling unit." This vague language is of concern because onerous parking requirements can be an obstacle to ADU creation.

Further, we are concerned that this bill would make several damaging changes to The Affordable Housing Appeals Act (Section 8-30g), which would result in a decline in the affordable housing supply in Connecticut over time. This bill would shorten the affordability period for deed restricted developments from forty to thirty years. Over time this would have a negative impact on the supply of deed restricted housing in the state as housing developments would more quickly reach the end of their deed restrictions and convert to market rate housing. We are unclear as to why the state would want to reduce the affordability period when there is a well-documented housing affordability crisis in Connecticut.

This bill also increases the point value of unrestricted units in a set-aside development from  $\frac{1}{4}$  point to one point for each unrestricted unit for purposes of achieving a four-year moratorium from Section 8-30g. This change would make it much easier for towns to achieve a moratorium from Section 8-30g without taking any additional actions to expand the supply of affordable housing in their community. This change would further slow the growth of new deed restricted housing development in the state.

As this and related legislation makes its way through the legislative process, we applaud the Housing Committee and the State Legislature for taking up the issue of allowing ADUs as of right in communities across Connecticut this session. It is critical that the State set standards that municipalities can use to generate more housing affordable to low and moderate-income individuals and families and people at different stages of life. This is a critical investment necessary to an equitable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Connecticut and our state's social and economic future.

Respectfully,



Melissa Kaplan-Macey  
VP State Programs and Connecticut Director  
Regional Plan Association