



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
(SB 340 and HB 6662)  
FRIDAY, MARCH 26, 2021**

**KILEY GOSSELIN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Representative Gibson, Senator Hartley, Representative Kennedy, Senator Somers, and honorable members of the committee, my name is Kiley Gosselin, and I am the Executive Director at the Partnership for Strong Communities (PSC). We are a statewide nonprofit policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ending homelessness, expanding affordable housing, and building strong communities in Connecticut. PSC staffs and manages both the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent end homelessness in Connecticut and the HOMEConnecticut Campaign to ensure that all Connecticut residents have access to a range of affordable housing choices in all communities. Each campaign brings together over 100 state and non-profit partners to identify and implement data-driven policy solutions and prepare consensus legislative agendas.

**We support SB 340 An Act Concerning Funding for Housing Services.** For many years, providers of state-funded services and shelter to Connecticut residents experiencing homelessness have gone without increases in pay. Members of the Reaching Home campaign that are both providers of these services and organizations that support providers have raised significant concerns regarding their ability to attract and retain employees, pay their employees a living wage, maintain reasonable caseload sizes, and support staff training. Reports of high turnover and of budgets stretched to the max are frequent. We have heard from providers that have front-line staff experiencing housing instability and needing to access the same services and programs they are assisting others to access.

SB 340 would require state agencies to review and adjust contracts to ensure that providers are able to pay living wages, overtime, hazard pay and benefits for front-line staff, maintain client caseload sizes within industry standards, and adequately fund other costs such as supplies, staff training and development and technology. Failure to support our essential front-line staff, over time will result in a dilution or denial of critical services to highly vulnerable individuals and families. This will result in more households cycling in and out of our homeless service system and other institutional systems of care, resulting in higher costs to the state. Ensuring that providers have the basic resources they need to do their jobs has never been more important. If we are committed as a state to making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time, supporting our housing and homeless providers is essential.

**We support HB 6662 An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establishing The Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health.** The pandemic has laid bare generations of racial inequalities in our healthcare and housing spaces, among many others. The evidence is clear and strong that racial inequality in our healthcare system and inequalities in access to healthcare lead to poorer health and wellbeing outcomes and shorter life expectancies for people of color. ***In our work, these outcomes are inextricably linked to the disproportionate representation of people of color facing eviction, experiencing housing***



***instability, and homelessness.*** We can no longer ignore these inequities or pretend that a “race blind” approach to healthcare and housing is an effective solution for remedying generations of structural and systemic racism. Accountability and action are essential next steps. This bill is an important step to move our state beyond recognition of inequity to a place where we hold ourselves and our systems of care accountable for actively rectifying them.

Sincerely,



Kiley Gosselin  
Executive Director  
Partnership for Strong Communities

