

Planning and Development Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6892
AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL BLIGHT ORDINANCES AND THE FINE
Title: FOR LITTERING
Vote Date: 3/20/2023
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 3/15/2023
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Planning and Development Committee
Rep. Christopher Rosario, 128th Dist.
Rep. Jennifer Leeper, 132nd Dist.
Sen. Martha Marx, 20th Dist.
Rep. Anthony L. Nolan, 39th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill is attempting to make the restoration of abandoned and blighted property more effective. It also expands the current population threshold, so more towns are included under the umbrella of the bill. The current fines are not significant enough to effectively encourage the restoration of abandoned and blighted property. The bill would allow for effective action to be taken if property owners repeatedly fail to maintain their property. The substitute language also expands the options to penalize those who litter.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[City of Hartford, Mayor, Luke Bronin](#)

Blight and neglect can have a profoundly negative effect on quality of life in neighborhoods, depressing property values, demoralizing residents, and dissuading investors. This bill would help towns in combating blight and would also help to combat illegal dumping.

- Issuance of a summons to court is far more effective in bringing properties into compliance than a mail-in fine.
- the current notice requirements included in CGS Sec. 7-148.... These notice requirements are burdensome and excessive, creating an unnecessary obstacle to prompt code enforcement.
- The current fine of \$199 is not sufficient to deter illegal littering.

Norwalk Common Council, Councilmember, Nora Niedzielski-Eich

H.B. 6892 would allow the City to help more economically disadvantaged residents improve their properties in ways we otherwise likely could not.

If several blighted properties in one neighborhood are revitalized, it can transform a community and spur long-term economic growth and opportunity for those residents.

We are currently limited in how we can enforce our blight ordinances against commercial properties. And we unfortunately have a few bad apples that see the current, limited, fines as merely the cost of doing business.

COST, Executive Director, Betsy Gara

Receivership is an effective tool in positioning residents, community-based non-profits, and local governments to move more quickly to rehabilitate abandoned and blighted properties. This benefits the communities in multiple ways.

Partnership for Strong Communities, Policy Director, Sean Ghio

Blighted properties decrease surrounding property values, increase fire risk in neighborhoods, pose safety hazards, and reduce local tax revenue.

It enables municipalities to transform vacant or abandoned properties into productive and tax-paying uses such as quality housing, economic development, and community facilities.

CCM, Chief Strategy Officer, Donna Carroccia

Echoed other comments pointing out the positive effect on communities (specifically property values) that this bill would have.

Receivership helps cities and small towns alike to reduce the cost and liability of vacant, blighted properties and gets properties back on tax rolls and into productive use.

Wilton resident, Kim Healy

Eligibility is currently restricted to those communities with populations of 35,000 or greater. This threshold limits excludes over 80% of Connecticut's municipalities based on the population threshold, despite the pressing need to address blighted properties. Most smaller

communities can benefit by eliminating the population restriction. I suggest that the impact of this bill on our smallest towns be considered and made exempt if needed.

LISC Connecticut, Executive Director, Jim Horan

Removing the population threshold from the existing law will expand access to the receivership process as a strategy to address vacant and abandoned properties for all communities across Connecticut.

City of Norwalk, Chief Building Official, William Ireland

Echoed the comments of others in support.

Connecticut Main Street Center, Executive Director, Michelle McCabe

According to a brief published by the Urban Institute, numerous studies have shown that vacant and blighted properties add costs to the city in terms of services used (police, fire, securing buildings, etc.), while reducing tax revenue.

HBRA-CT, CEO, Jim Perras

Many of these properties, if rehabilitated, would be naturally affordable housing that would help to alleviate the housing accessibility crisis Connecticut is currently facing.

City of Norwalk, Mayor, Harry Rilling

Amending the statute to raise the fine for blight ordinance violations from \$100 to \$150 will incentivize more people to fix their blighted properties and better deter repeat offenders

The funding from these fines will help other community members by continuing to go towards the City's Blight Fund, which provides a pathway for the City to help people on fixed incomes correct their blighted properties.

Remediating blighted properties often creates new spaces for local businesses, new jobs and affordable housing that benefit our residents' health and well-being.

Town of Wilton, First Selectwoman, Lynne Vanderslice

Unfortunately, we have no such tool for commercial blight. HB 6892 will provide Wilton and other small communities with a tool.

Provides examples from Wilton, CT.

City of Norwalk Common Council, Majority Leader, Darlene Young

Echoed comments/arguments made by others in support.

General support:

[Diane Barrett](#)

[Juliette Carney](#)

[John Curtis](#)

[Nina DePeugh](#)

[John DiCenzo](#)

[Bruce Dominick](#)

[John Gardiner](#)

[Rita Garland](#)

[Bernd Klink](#)

[Michele Klink](#)

[Susan Mangino](#)

[Lynley Middleberg](#)

[Jennifer Nield](#)

[Jaison Panacherry](#)

[Kathleen Smeriglio](#)

[Lyubov D'Souza](#)

[Ryan D'Souza](#)

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Noah Safian](#)

Concerned that this bill violates property rights and is an inappropriate extension of power by the state over municipalities.

Reported by: Matthew Lombardo

Date: 3/22/23