

Dear Chair and Members of the Planning and Development Committee.

I am testifying on Raised H.B. No. 6892 AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL BLIGHT ORDINANCES.

This bill will (1) remove the municipal population threshold for certain parties to petition the Superior Court for the appointment of a receiver for a blighted and abandoned property, (2) allow municipalities to enact blight ordinances concerning both residential and commercial real property, (3) increase the permissible fines for blight ordinance violations, (4) increase the fine for littering to five hundred dollars, (5) reduce notice requirements to lienors when a municipality remediates certain code violations, and (6) remove certain blight violations from the infractions list.

This legislation makes it possible for qualified entities to petition the court to become the receiver of a vacant or abandoned property, carry out necessary rehabilitation, and return it to productive use. This legislation enables municipalities to transform problem properties into productive and tax-paying uses such as quality housing, economic development and community facilities. The receivership statute is a critical tool in enabling communities to fight blight. However, 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.

Blighted properties have negative impact on surrounding property values, ultimately pulling down the values of a neighborhood overall. Numerous studies have shown that vacant and blighted properties add costs to municipalities in terms of services used (police, fire, securing buildings, etc.), while reducing tax revenue.

I urge you to pass HB 6892 and allow towns, like Wilton, to take action when there are blighted commercial properties .

Thank you.

Kim Healy
Wilton resident