Testimony before the Housing Committee regarding S.B. 752

Gwen Pastor, Policy Analyst, Connecticut Association for Human Services, February 28, 2017

Good afternoon, Senator Slossberg, Senator Hwang, Representative Butler, and members of the Housing Committee.

My name is Gwen Pastor, and I am a Policy Analyst at the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS is a statewide nonprofit agency that works to reduce poverty and promote economic success through both policy and program initiatives. I am testifying in support S.B. 752, An Act Concerning Housing Segregation.

Connecticut is one of the most racially and economically segregated states in the country. In Connecticut, 27% of top earning households live in neighborhoods that are predominately White and wealthy. In comparison, other large metropolitan areas in the United States only 10% of the top top-earning households do. Policies, both historic and modern, such as exclusionary zoning, racial covenants, redlining, and other policies, have and continue to shape our state, trapping low-income people and people of color in struggling communities with little chance of success.

Research has shown that where a person lives strongly influences their chances of success, including health, school achievement, and long-term success and well-being. Along with being one of the most racially and economically segregated states, Connecticut has the highest educational achievement gap between low-income and high-income residents in the nation. Children of color and children from low-income families consistently fare worse than their White and affluent counterparts. White children, on average, score 30.8 points higher on their 8th grade level reading tests than Black children and 26 points higher than Hispanic children.

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A Century of Strengthening Children, Families, and Communities
In comparison, nationally, White children score 26.4 points higher than Black children and 21 points higher than Hispanic children. Race is not the only factor in the achievement gap in Connecticut, and affluent children who do not qualify for free or reduced priced school meals score 26.5 points higher than low-income children who are eligible for free or reduced priced meals.

The achievement gap does not end with test scores. Educational attainment in Connecticut is greatly varied depending upon race. 49.5% (774,875) of non-Hispanic White adults in Connecticut hold an associate degree or higher, compared to 28.8% (201,860) of minority adults.\(^3\)\(^4\)

The gap in educational attainment between racial groups is reflected in their subsequent incomes and job opportunities, with only 23.1% of non-Hispanic white workers holding low-wage jobs, compared with the 40.3% of minority workers who hold low-wage jobs.\(^5\)\(^6\)

[Figure 2: Working Poor Families Data 2015]

In order to make Connecticut more equitable for all of Connecticut’s residents, we must be a leader in fair housing policy. We must invest in revitalizing struggling communities, while also consciously working to generate the housing choices in thriving communities that have been denied to many low-income families. We must turn our urban areas into cities of choice, wherein residents choose to live, rather than are forced, and must make the thriving areas in our state accessible to all residents. We understand that hard decisions must be made this session. However, affordable and accessible housing is crucial to our state’s success. CAHS supports S.B. 752 and all bills that would make housing in Connecticut equitable and fair for all residents.

\(^3\) Working Poor Families Project Compiled Data. 2015.”Percent of Non-Hispanic White Adults 18-64 with an Associates Degree or Higher.”

\(^4\) Working Poor Families Project Compiled Data. 2015.”Percent of Minority Adults 18-64 with an Associates Degree or Higher.”

\(^5\) Working Poor Families Project Compiled Data. 2015.”Percent of Non-Hispanic White Adults 18 and Over in Low-Wage Jobs, 2014.”

\(^6\) Working Poor Families Project Compiled Data. 2015.”Percent of Minority Adults 18 and Over in Low-Wage Jobs, 2014.”