

**How We Can End Housing Segregation in Connecticut**

*Guidance on Creating an Op-Ed Supporting OCA’s Policy Agenda*

1. **Introduce yourself and your connection to the issue of segregation AND/OR identify your theme.**

*Personal Introduction*

*Your views about your neighborhood are very individual. The views expressed below are based on interviews we have conducted with a variety of families, but we encourage you to include your own individual perspective.*

Example 1: *I have been a resident of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for XY years, a wonderful place to [work/raise my family/enjoy the parks, schools, and my neighbors/or some combo of these or similar personal things].* *But as a person who believes deeply in fairness, I am disappointed to know that our town is 98% White. I am concerned about the impact our town’s lack of diversity has on our children and our state. We can do so much better if we all work together.*

Example 2: *I have been a resident of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for XY years, and while I love my community, it is clear to me that it struggles as a result of disinvestment spurred by poverty concentration, I see this in the educational opportunities available to my children, the level of crime in my neighborhood, and the lives of my neighbors. While I am committed to staying in my community, I believe there should be choices for low-income families.*

Example 3*: I have been a resident of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for XY years, and, it is clear to me that my neighborhood is not a healthy environment for my family. Our local schools are not providing a comprehensive education for my children and I am concerned about our family’s physical safety. I would very much like to give my children access to greater opportunity, but affordable housing options are simply not available in areas that are thriving.*

Example 4*: As an academic who has spent decades studying the dynamics of the Connecticut economy, I am deeply troubled by the economic impact of our state’s economic and racial segregation. And as a resident of \_\_\_\_\_\_ for XY years, I believe we all share a responsibility to do what it takes to end this segregation. We can do it.*

1. **Make the case**

Why does this matter so much to our state, our children, and to all of us?

First, the most important reason: segregation is wrong. In Connecticut, we value fairness and an equal opportunity to live, work, go to school and share in the benefits and responsibilities of our state without exclusion or discrimination. That’s fundamental.

*Insert personal statement: e.g. In my [town/faith/profession/family..] we [believe/know this is important/] because…*

Housing segregation also leads to poorer educational outcomes, strains the resources of our struggling cities, and harms our state economy. When we keep building affordable housing mostly in low income neighborhoods in struggling cities with over-burdened schools, we keep replicating the conditions that make it harder for kids and families to succeed. We also make it hard for cities to thrive, which weakens our state. It’s bad for everybody.

Most people are surprised to learn that Connecticut is one of the most racially, ethnically and economically segregated states in the country (according to a state report, Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice).And Connecticut’s geographic wealth disparity has gotten worse over the last 35 years.

1. **Offer the solution**

We can fix this, but we have to take strong action. Every town in Connecticut - cities and suburbs alike - can have its fair share of affordable housing so that more people can choose to live where they wish and where they can find good jobs and schools.

The Connecticut legislature is currently considering a bill entitled [TBD]. It will transform the way we do the business of housing in Connecticut. This includes:

* Streamlining government reporting on fair housing.
* Requiring the state to use all its tools and resources to achieve more balance in creating affordable housing among cities and suburbs.
* Rewarding towns that are fostering their fair share of affordable housing.
* Adjusting housing authority jurisdictions to remove disincentives for housing authorities to promote greater housing choices.

1. **Options, if you have more space**
   1. Segregation did not happen by accident. Local decisions and government policies implemented over decades such as enforcement of racial covenants, redlining, exclusionary zoning, and discrimination against people of color when making federal home loans created the segregated landscape in Connecticut.

We have to work together to “unwind” this history and build a better future for our state.

* 1. Good housing policy is good educational policy.

Over 20 years ago the Connecticut Supreme Court found that Connecticut’s public schools were unconstitutionally racially segregated and ordered the state to develop a comprehensive remedy. Four months ago, Superior Court Judge Moukawsher, in a wide-ranging decision found a plethora of fundamental inequalities, including funding formulas and beyond, in the delivery of public education in our state. Addressing these issues correctly will be expensive if the solution does not also include taking on the fundamental problem in our state, residential segregation. Housing policy is school policy.

4.3 Our state budget crisis requires us to do things differently.

Connecticut’s daunting budget deficit requires a reassessment of business as usual in our state. Economic and racial segregation and poverty concentration is expensive because it generates multigenerational poverty and community disinvestment. Areas with greater levels of geographic equity are more vibrant economically. Low-income children who move to mixed income areas do better in school and earn significantly more – and therefore pay significantly more in taxes – over their lifetimes. By getting serious about addressing segregation, we can produce significant savings for our state, increase municipal and state revenue, and contribute to addressing our budget deficit.

1. **Conclusion: Wrap up with a positive statement about actions taken so far, an emphasis on one or more of the following themes, and a personal statement from your heart:**

I applaud the Malloy administration for steps it has taken to address segregation through efforts to protect Connecticut’s Affordable Housing Appeals Act, using “opportunity mapping” to guide housing policy, and making efforts to prioritize the creation of subsidized housing in areas with high performing schools. But much more needs to be done.

* *No matter what is going on in Washington, Connecticut is not the land of divisive, mean-spirited rhetoric and policies. We believe in fundamental fairness.*
* *Housing policy is school policy.*
* *Segregation is costly and our state economy cannot continue business as usual.*

Example: *I am committed to doing my part in XY town, and I urge/ask my neighbors and elected leaders to join me. I want my grandchildren to grow up in the best Connecticut.*