



Let's End Housing Segregation in Connecticut

Connecticut is one of the most racially, ethnically, and economically segregated states in the country, with pockets of great poverty next to neighborhoods of great abundance. This division is extraordinarily expensive - it has human costs and hurts our economy. We can change it and build healthier, thriving communities while giving all children access to great schools for less money than we are currently spending for a system that yields grossly unequal results. We can create greater housing choices for low-income families and transform struggling communities into vital regional centers.

**Ending housing segregation =
fairness, opportunity, and a vibrant economy.**

Can we really end housing segregation? Yes, we can.

- **Use existing state and federal housing dollars and tools in a balanced way in cities and suburbs across the state;**
- **Make modest and reasonable investments to ensure that every city and town is an open community that offers its fair share of affordable housing.**

All families should have opportunities to live, work and raise their children where they can find great schools, good jobs and the best future.

Here is how to create economically vibrant open communities in 5 steps:

- (1) Plan for desegregation and greater housing choice.** Improve the state's major tool for planning, the Plan of Conservation and Development, to include recommended guidelines for all regions to welcome a reasonable apportionment of the need for affordable housing. Without such changes the state will likely be out of compliance with its federal duty to affirmatively further fair housing.
- (2) Balance where government-subsidized housing is located.** All communities need housing that is affordable, at levels sustainable for municipal vitality. We need state targets that promote balance and reporting to ensure full access.

To balance government-subsidized housing we need:

- Greater legislative guidance to create a full assessment of affordable housing need, consistent with *existing* federal and state obligations, including the need for units at various income levels, with a variety of bedroom configurations, and accessible features for people with mobility challenges.
- Streamlined and modernized reporting of subsidized housing data with greater legislative guidance to help state agencies in carrying out the legislature’s directives while providing this core government function. The state does not currently have a comprehensive list of the subsidized housing stock in Connecticut. This is a basic matter of data transparency.
- Meaningful review and enforcement of existing mandates to market across racial lines.
- Allow housing authorities to locate some rehabilitated units in areas with high performing schools, consistent with tenant wishes.
- Full support for Connecticut’s 27-year-old law, CGS Sec. 8-30g, the Affordable Housing Appeals Act, that protects us against unfair or discriminatory decisions about where affordable housing can be built.

(3) Design Tenant-based Subsidies to foster choices. Three measures are needed to do this:

- Optional extended housing authority jurisdiction to create opportunities for families needing low-income housing to have broader housing choices.
- Fully-funded “mobility counseling” to provide complete information about housing choices everywhere. Mobility counseling programs have proven highly effective in places like Baltimore, Chicago, and Dallas. Connecticut’s new program could be fully funded for under \$2 million – and this would support the *Sheff* settlement.
- Open Choice Rental Assistance Program Pilot Program allowing families living in struggling communities but sending their children to school in high performing school districts to move there if they so desire and are income-qualified. This directly addresses school desegregation.

(4) Make desegregation obligations meaningful. Reinstate the ability to enforce the state law requiring desegregation by allowing people to go to court if they have faced unfair or discriminatory actions that result in segregation. For the state obligation to be meaningful, it must be enforceable.

(5) Support investments in struggling communities. Support measures that bring resources to struggling communities and generate income mixing while ensuring the integrity of neighborhoods and protecting against gentrification. One example is lifting the income cap on homeownership programs in the state’s most poverty-concentrated areas.

What will this cost and how will we pay for it in a time of budget deficits?

Many of the recommendations here simply involve a reallocation of existing resources. For example, adding greater balance to the state’s existing investments in subsidized housing can be accomplished by simply shifting current expenditures.

Still, to make these recommendations work, about \$2 million is needed to fund (1) data analysis that housing agencies are already responsible for and (2) mobility counseling that is currently funded at an inadequate level. These investments will ensure that Connecticut is following federal mandates that are prerequisites to the receipt of federal housing dollars, significantly decrease the cost of compliance with the *Sheff v. O’Neill* school desegregation settlement, and support greater educational funding equity. For more details, visit www.ctoca.org