

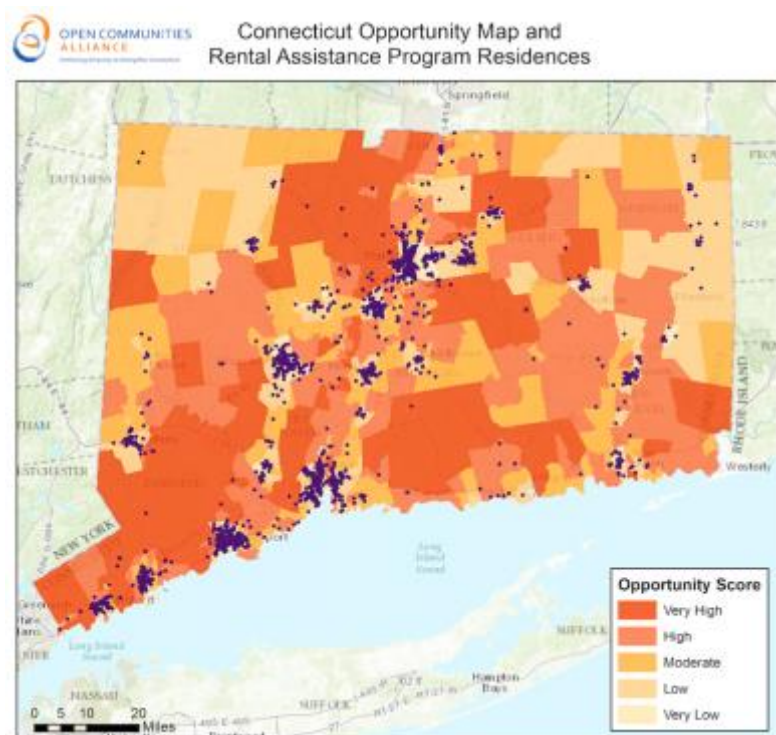


## Ending Housing Segregation Step 3: Design Tenant-based Subsidies to foster choices.

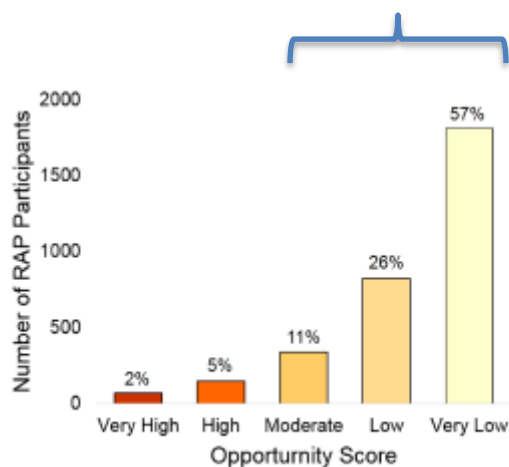
Tenant-based subsidies, like the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program and state Rental Assistance Program, assist households earning less than 50% of Area Median Income (or about \$35,000) rent market-rate units. These programs typically ask participants to pay 30-40% of their incomes towards rent and the remaining portion is covered by the subsidy. Close to 80% of participants in these programs are people of color.

In theory, these programs should allow participants greater choices in where to live and promote desegregation, but in fact, a web of factors act as incentives that limit housing choices to areas that are isolated from opportunities, like high-performing schools, safe streets, and employment.

**Here are the components of a plan to increase choices for families using tenant-based housing subsidies:**



*83% of RAP households* are located outside of higher opportunity, according to the best available data, which is not typically made publicly available.



**Component 1: Expand housing authority jurisdiction.** According to state law, housing authority jurisdiction is defined by its town boundaries unless a housing authority makes an agreement with other towns to administer programs regionally (CGS Section 8-40). To our knowledge, no regional housing authority relationships exist that would help voucher families cross racial lines. To address this, we recommend giving housing authorities the option of extending their jurisdiction to high and very high opportunity areas, as defined by the Department of Housing, within 30 miles of a town's border. This would expand choices for voucher families using tenant- or project-based vouchers. In theory, expanded jurisdiction could also broaden the areas where housing authorities can develop housing, but in reality, housing authorities can do this under the current system, in partnership with a separate corporate entity.

**Component 2: Fully fund mobility counseling.** Mobility counseling is a counseling intervention for families using vouchers that ensures they have full information about the impact of neighborhood features on life outcomes, as well as available units in areas they might not typically consider. It is clear from research around the country that without mobility counseling voucher families will live in segregated, opportunity-isolated areas. We are grateful that the state currently has a statutorily-established mobility counseling program, but it is funded at an insufficient level to make a meaningful impact. With an additional \$2 million of funding, the state's mobility counseling program could assist 7% of voucher and RAP families with children connect to high-performing school districts.

**Component 3: Open Choice Rental Assistance Program Pilot.** It is a critical time to connect *housing* choice and *school* choice. The Open Choice Program gives Hartford parents the option of participating in a lottery for a seat in participating suburban school districts. Many Open Choice families qualify for the state's Rental Assistance Program and would consider moving to the town where their children attend school and in becoming a greater part of the community. Such moves would open up Open Choice slots for new Hartford children. We propose that the Commissioner of Housing and the Commissioner of the Department of Education work together to establish a pilot Open Choice RAP program, which could be done by making the program a priority within existing resources if RAP funding stays level, or through an expansion of RAP if new funding becomes available.