



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

A. Create optional expanded housing authority jurisdiction

Sec. 8-40. Creation of housing authorities. In each municipality of the state there is created a public body corporate and politic to be known as the “housing authority” of the municipality; provided such authority shall not transact any business or exercise its powers hereunder until the governing body of the municipality by resolution declares that there is need for a housing authority in the municipality, provided it shall find (1) that insanitary or unsafe inhabited dwelling accommodations exist in the municipality or (2) that there is a shortage of safe or sanitary dwelling accommodations in the municipality available to families of low income at rentals they can afford or (3) that there is a shortage of safe or sanitary dwelling accommodations in the municipality available to families of moderate income at rentals they can afford. In determining whether dwelling accommodations are unsafe or insanitary, said governing body may take into consideration the degree of overcrowding, the percentage of land coverage, the light, air, space and access available to the inhabitants of such dwelling accommodations, the size and arrangement of the rooms, the sanitary facilities and the extent to which conditions exist in such buildings which endanger life or property by fire or other causes. The governing bodies of two or more municipalities may create a regional housing authority, which shall have all the powers, duties and responsibilities conferred upon housing authorities by this chapter and chapter 130. The area of operation of such authority shall include the municipalities for which such authority is created. Such authority shall act through a board of commissioners composed of two representatives from each municipality appointed for terms of four years in the manner provided in section 8-41. Any housing authority may opt to adopt extended authority including any high or very high opportunity census tract within the state of Connecticut, as defined by section 8-348, within 30 miles of its municipal borders.

Change: Provides an option for housing authorities to expand their jurisdiction, as defined by state law, to high and very high opportunity areas, as defined by the Department of Housing, within 30 miles of their town borders.

This will allow housing authorities to:

- (1) Encourage tenant-based Housing Choice Voucher holders to consider a broader geographic diversity of housing options without causing the housing authorities to lose administrative fees when tenants leave the town.
- (2) Expand the potential locations of project-based Housing Choice Vouchers.
- (3) Reduce the red tape housing authorities must contend with in order to undertake development outside of their towns (something that they can currently do by creating a subsidiary corporation or working with a partner).

B. Fully fund mobility counseling and include access to security deposit guarantees

Sec. 8-348. Residence mobility counseling program. (a) The Department of Housing shall, ~~within existing resources of the department~~ establish a comprehensive and effective residence mobility counseling program serving at least 7% of program participants with children annually and following best practices to assist individuals or families in relocating their residences to higher opportunity areas through education and support services. This program shall include access to security deposit guarantees through the state's program. The commissioner may contract with one or more nonprofit corporations to provide such residence mobility counseling. Individuals and families eligible for the residence mobility counseling program shall currently have a certificate or voucher from either: (1) The federal Housing and Urban Development Section 8 program, or (2) the state rental assistance program. For purposes of this subsection, "opportunity areas" means those areas designated as such using opportunity mapping analysis that includes census tract level assessment of educational, economic and neighborhood characteristics, including education data and crime rates. The Department of Housing shall make such opportunity mapping analysis available on the Internet web site of the Department of Housing.

(b) Counseling provided pursuant to this section shall include, but need not be limited to, (1) providing information regarding communities, schools, employment opportunities and community services available in various areas, (2) assisting with locating rental housing that meets the individual's or family's needs, (3) facilitating a relocation by negotiating with the current landlord about the transfer of rental assistance certificates or vouchers, and with the new landlord about security deposits, rental payments and acceptance of rental assistance certificates or vouchers, and (4) acting as a liaison between the individual or family and the landlord to encourage a successful transition and housing stability.

(c) Annually, the Commissioner of Housing shall submit a report on the program to the General Assembly, in accordance with section 8-37qqq.

Change: Requires full funding to allow the state's mobility counseling program to serve 7% of the families with children within the federal Housing Choice Voucher and state Rental Assistance Program effectively and consistent with national best practices. Mobility counseling is one of the most effective strategies available to connect tenant-based government housing subsidy holders to housing in high-resource neighborhoods. According to a comprehensive study long-term study by Harvard University, it produces life-transforming results for low-income children, including significant increases in lifetime earnings, increased likelihood of attending high quality colleges and greater likelihood of being in long term stable relationships, as compared with children who remained in high poverty environments.

C. Launch an Open Choice Vouchers pilot program

Sec. 8-345. (Formerly Sec. 17b-812). Rental assistance for low-income families living in privately-owned rental housing. Regulations. Hearing. (a) The Commissioner of Housing shall implement and administer a program of rental assistance for low-income families living in privately-owned rental housing. For the purposes of this section, a low-income family is one whose income does not exceed fifty per cent of the median family income for the area of the state in which such family lives, as determined by the commissioner.

(b) Housing eligible for participation in the program shall comply with applicable state and local health, housing, building and safety codes.

(c) In addition to an element in which rental assistance certificates are made available to qualified tenants, to be used in eligible housing which such tenants are able to locate, the program may include a housing support element in which rental assistance for tenants is linked to participation by the property owner in other municipal, state or federal housing repair, rehabilitation or financing programs. The commissioner shall use rental assistance under this section so as to encourage the preservation of existing housing and the revitalization of neighborhoods or the creation of additional rental housing.

(d) The commissioner may designate a portion of the rental assistance available under the program for tenant-based and project-based supportive housing units. To the extent practicable rental assistance for supportive housing shall adhere to the requirements of the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program, 42 USC 1437f(o), relative to calculating the tenant's share of the rent to be paid.

(e) The commissioner shall administer the program under this section to promote housing choice for certificate holders and encourage racial and economic integration. The commissioner shall establish maximum rent levels for each municipality in a manner that promotes the use of the program in all municipalities. Any certificate issued pursuant to this section may be used for housing in any municipality in the state. The commissioner shall inform certificate holders that a certificate may be used in any municipality and, to the extent practicable, the commissioner shall assist certificate holders in finding housing in the municipality of their choice.

(f) Nothing in this section shall give any person a right to continued receipt of rental assistance at any time that the program is not funded.

(g) The commissioner shall adopt regulations in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54 to carry out the purposes of this section. The regulations shall establish maximum income eligibility guidelines for such rental assistance and criteria for determining the amount of rental assistance which shall be provided to eligible families.

(h) Any person aggrieved by a decision of the commissioner or the commissioner's agent pursuant to the program under this section shall have the right to a hearing in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54. Section 1.

(i) The commissioner of housing, in consultation with the commissioner of education, shall develop a pilot program to provide rental assistance certificates authorized under this section to families with children participating in interdistrict school programs receiving grants under section 10-266j of the general statutes, to enable such families to live in the town where their children attend school.

Change: Creates a pilot program for families participating in the Open Choice Program who income-qualify for tenant-based housing subsidies and would like to move to the community where their children are attending school.