

Testimony of the Rev. Josh Pawelek in Support of Senate Bill 752
“An Act Concerning Housing Segregation”
Tuesday, February 28th, 2017

I am the Rev. Josh Pawelek. I am a resident of Glastonbury and I have served as the minister of the Unitarian Universalist Society: East in Manchester for the past fourteen years. I wish to thank Chairs Butler, Hwang, and Slossberg and all the members of the Housing Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 752, “An Act Concerning Housing Segregation.”

I am not an expert on housing law, but I know what I see as I travel around CT’s cities and towns. I see racial and class segregation. I hear reports or read articles from time to time that confirm the truth of what I see. Connecticut is one of the most racially and economically segregated states in the country; historic and modern policies have and continue to shape our state, including exclusionary zoning, racial covenants, redlining, and other policies; and people of color are concentrated in areas of the state that are struggling. The reports and articles are out there—there is a lot of great material on the Open Communities Alliance website at <http://www.ctoca.org/>—but nothing convinces me more that we live in a highly segregated state than waking up in Glastonbury and driving into North Hartford for a meeting. The differences are stark.

Despite the work of many dedicated politicians, government officials and activists over the decades, race and class segregation remain entrenched in our state. While this negatively impacts the quality of life for all of us, it is particularly pernicious for people and families who cannot break out of cycles of poverty—people who, primarily because of where they live, face enormous barriers to accessing quality education, quality healthcare, quality housing, quality jobs, and safe communities.

Senate Bill 752 will not solve all of these problems, but I support it, and I appeal to you to support it, because it takes much needed steps in breaking down barriers when it comes to housing segregation. As such it is a critical part of our efforts as a state to combat poverty. By making it easier to collect and publish data on housing production, by making it easier to assess housing needs in all regions of the state, by providing housing authorities with the option to expand their jurisdiction, by increasing funding for mobility counseling, and by increasing the amount of marketing to people across lines of race and class—by doing all these things—SB 752 will increase housing choice, especially for people who are looking to move to higher opportunity areas like the town where I live.

One of the greatest impediments to ending segregation is lack of choice in housing. SB 752 creates more choice. That is why I support it and that is why I ask you to support it as well.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Josh Pawelek