

**Testimony of Ann Pratt in Support of S.B. 752, An Act Concerning Housing Segregation
Tuesday, February 28th, 2017**

To Housing Committee Chairs Senator Hwang, Senator Slossberg and Representative Butler, and members of the Housing Committee—thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 752, An Act Concerning Housing Segregation.

My name is Ann Pratt, Director of Organizing for CT Citizen Action Group, a statewide organization committed to working with people to bring about social, economic and environmental justice.

I strongly believe that intentionally building inclusive, integrated communities— with a full and robust commitment to integrated schools, communities and workplaces— is one of the most important public policies we can do as a state, and as a country.

I had the good fortune of living in two very racially and economically diverse communities— First in Cleveland Heights Ohio where our son attended a diverse and vibrant public school, and we lived, worked and thrived in an integrated community. In 2011, I lived for 4 years in Harlem, another vibrant and diverse community. Currently, I live in West Hartford. While not nearly as diverse as Harlem, or Cleveland Heights, it is a community that is committed to expanding its racial and economic diversity— both in its neighborhoods and in our schools— both strategies I fully support and want to see expanded.

I lift these 3 experiences from my own background as aspirational models for CT to work diligently and aggressively to create more racially diverse communities. CT is one of the most racially and economically segregated states in the country— with the highest achievement gap, and racial wage gap that is glaring— as recently reported by CT Voices for Children— Black and Hispanic workers earn a median hourly wage that is, respectably, about \$7.25 and \$8 less than whites. The dearth of mixed-income, affordable housing for families and children in most of our suburban and ex-urban towns serves to compound and exacerbate these racial disparities.

The town I grew up in—Bridgewater CT, is an unfortunate example of how our state’s housing policies— both at the local and state level— restrict opportunity for black and brown communities, and prevent white families and most importantly —children— from growing up and thriving in racially and economically mixed communities. Despite numerous efforts by many of the town’s residents, year after year, to build affordable, racially diverse mixed housing —elected leaders and defenders of the status quo —to this day— prevent such developments from occurring.

I strongly urge you to pass SB. 752. The provisions set forth in this bill, including creating greater support for mobility counseling, streamlining reporting of subsidized housing data, ensuring meaningful review and enforcement of existing mandates, fully supporting CT’s existing law— the Affordable Housing Appeals Act, all measures that will strengthen and enhance racially diverse communities, and substantially increase open communities and provide much needed access to opportunities for communities of color. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.