

**Testimony of Bildade Augustin in Support of H.B. 7297  
Before the Planning & Development Committee of the Connecticut Legislature  
Wednesday, March 22, 2017**

Good Morning, Chairs & Ranking Members, and members of the Planning & Development Committee. My name is Bildade Augustin, and I live in Wethersfield, Connecticut. I am writing to you today to express my ardent support for H.B. 7297 and the increased access to affordable housing that this bill creates.

I moved to Connecticut for the first time to attend college, living off-campus in West Hartford. After graduation, I moved to Hartford and became pregnant with my daughter. When you are a single parent, you are often working in crisis mode, and our lives at that time were certainly not devoid of struggle. When my car was stolen for the second time, I decided to make a change: I was done with crime, done with vandalism.

Fortunately, after living for while in New Britain, we were able to move to Wethersfield. My daughter and I have lived there for more than two years, and we absolutely love our community. I love Hartford, and it works for some families, but it was not the right fit for us. In Hartford, we had very little privacy, and most people were hesitant to get to know their neighbors. I personally did not feel safe.

In Wethersfield, however, I feel comfortable opening my home to those around me. I have developed a wonderful rapport with other parents. We can rely on each other for help with getting our children to after-school activities and carpooling to different events in town. As a single parent, this kind of support from the people around me is paramount, and I am thankful to live in a town with such kindness and generosity. My daughter and I have made many different moves in the past, and I can now say that we are finally happy where we live.

Notably, I have felt accepted and welcomed in Wethersfield despite the fact that I am Black and the town is predominately White. While no place is perfect, for the most part I find that my neighbors are wonderful and embrace diversity.

We could not have made this move if there had not been affordable housing options in Wethersfield – but more housing is desperately needed to ensure true housing choices. Please vote to support families like mine who desire to chart the destinies of our children. H.B. 7297 can help expand options for families looking to move to a new community so they can not only survive but thrive.