



***Sample Letters to the Editor***  
***The Importance of Bond Funds for Affordable Housing***

Upon hearing of Governor Lamont's proposal to cut bond funding for affordable housing, CHC was asked to develop sample talking points and letters to the editor for Coalition members and others to use in bringing the issue to the public's attention.

Below are several sample letters to the editor that you can use to write about the importance of bond funding in developing affordable housing in Connecticut. Use whichever message matches your concerns. Personalize it as much as possible, remembering that the average reader has little knowledge of the affordable housing development process. Your letter can be brief, but emphasize some of the following points:

- Affordable housing is a key component of economic development;
- Too often housing that is affordable is located far from a job; people need access to affordable housing where they work;
- People who live in affordable housing have more disposable income to spend on the goods and services they need, more disposable income means more local purchasing power;
- The development of affordable housing requires a significant infrastructure of developers, architects, builders, property managers, and service providers; depleting the affordable housing pipeline will create a big loss in this infrastructure that will be hard to replace;
- Whether a developer builds homes for rich people or poor people, land, materials, and labor cost the same. If the housing is for rich people, the developer doesn't need a subsidy to cover development costs. If housing is for middle- or lower-income people, the developer can't cover his or her costs, and therefore is less likely to build housing for these households. This is why state subsidy is so necessary.

Please send us a copy of your letter so that we can continue to track the communication that's occurring about this issue.

### Sample #1

A magazine article a decade or so ago posited that everything one needs to know can be learned in kindergarten.

I would suggest that everything anyone needs to know about housing can be learned in Economics 101. It's supply and demand. The more supply to meet the demand, the lower – and thus more affordable – the prices.

Connecticut now has the sixth highest median housing prices in the nation. The reason: the supply we have – too many single family homes – is not the supply that we need. More affordable apartments, condos, starter homes and other modest multifamily units are what Millennials, working households and Baby Boomers now want.

Gov. Lamont wants to reduce state borrowing because the state's debt service costs are too high. He's right. But cutting out borrowing to finance housing makes no sense. Borrowing to build housing will increase supply, reduce prices and help keep and attract new population to Connecticut.

Housing creation is good for economic growth, for municipalities' grand list and good for the people who can live affordably.

We need a debt diet, not a starvation diet.

### Sample #2

Connecticut has lots to brag about: its beauty, its shoreline, its schools, its workers, its proximity to New York, Boston and so much more.

But housing – the prices, the choices – isn't a plus. Connecticut has a surplus of single family homes, but they are out of reach for too many. And it doesn't have nearly enough apartments and condos, townhomes and other ownership opportunities.

Thousands of people are homeless. Tens of thousands are at risk of homelessness because they can barely pay the rent.

Now, Gov. Lamont wants to cut borrowing to finance affordable housing projects. Not a good idea. We need more housing because thousands of people need it, because prices will come down if we create more.

The governor appears to be a good guy who cares. Housing people can afford is a basic right. I'm sure he gets that. I'm sure he wants to provide that.

### Sample #3

Connecticut has something called a "housing wage" – what you need to earn per hour to afford a typical 2BR apartment in the state. It's \$24.90 an hour.

Do the math and that translates to more than \$51,000 a year. Take it from me: a lot of people doing important jobs in our state don't earn that much.

Where does that leave them? Paying 30%, 40%, even 50% of their incomes on rent.

That's because Connecticut has too little rental housing. So the rentals we have cost too much, and too often are substandard.

The only way to solve the problem is to create more supply to meet the increasing demand from workers, families, downsizing retirees and Millennials who have too much college debt to buy.

The legislature needs to provide financing for more multifamily housing these people can afford. It's that simple.

#### Sample #4

Much is being said, and written, about Gov. Lamont's proposal to put Connecticut on a "debt diet" – cut borrowing to reduce the state's debt service costs.

In one sense, it's hard to argue against. Every dollar spent on interest can't be spent on education, environmental quality, public safety and more.

On the other hand, there are certain problems that can't be solved without state financing. Like homes low- and moderate-income people can afford.

Whether a developer builds homes for rich people or poor people, land, materials and labor cost the same. If rich people are buying or renting those homes, the developer doesn't need subsidy to cover development costs. But if poor people are buying or renting, they can't pay as much so the developer's income can't cover his costs. That's where state subsidy makes the crucial difference.

Connecticut has hundreds of thousands of homeowners and renters spending more than 30% of their income on housing. That's terrible for them, and terrible for the state's economy.

The answer: increasing the supply of affordable homes. A debt diet applied to housing finance is going to hurt the wrong people.

#### Sample #5

Every time Connecticut test scores are released, we hear the same story: a wide and seemingly unclosable achievement gap. Low-income kids going to overburdened schools in cities that can't afford as many experienced teachers, smaller class sizes, AP courses and art, theater, music and other enrichments.

Research clearly shows that children who go to high-resource schools score higher on standardized tests.

But in Connecticut, low- and moderate-income parents – and their children – are trapped. They can't go to higher-resource schools because they can't afford the price of admission: a home in those high-resource towns.

State subsidies have allowed the creation of mixed-income housing – with a portion of homes reserved for low- or moderate-income households – in high-resource school districts from Darien to Stonington, Ridgefield to Farmington. They are all successful developments, but there aren't enough of them.

Gov. Lamont's proposed debt diet – no state financing for housing – will deny those families the choices of the towns, and schools, that would work best for children and their parents.

I can't believe Gov. Lamont, a man who cares deeply about opportunity, really wants that.