



## **Testimony in Support of S.B. 980 – An Act Authorizing And Adjusting Bonds Of The State**

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

April 3, 2023

**Mendi Blue Paca**

**President & CEO, Fairfield County's Community Foundation**

Senator Fonfara, Representative Horn, Ranking Members Martin and Cheeseman, and distinguished Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee members, Fairfield County's Community Foundation is grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony supporting **S.B. 980 – An Act Authorizing And Adjusting Bonds Of The State**.

Fairfield County's Community Foundation serves the 23 towns and cities in Fairfield County. We work closely with community organizations, nonprofits, businesses, and philanthropists to address challenges and identify opportunities to create a Fairfield County where everyone has an equitable opportunity to thrive. Informed by three decades of partnering with and serving our community, we have awarded over \$390 million in grants to nonprofits in Fairfield County and beyond.

The Foundation is centering our investments on creating systemic and structural change in housing, health, education, and income and asset building to achieve greater racial equity and create a stronger, more thriving region.

The Foundation has prioritized addressing the lack of affordable housing in Fairfield County over the last two decades. Over the years, we have shifted housing efforts from investments in brick-and-mortar units to catalyzing county-wide system change. We have been a driving force behind Fairfield County's Center for Housing Opportunity (FCCHO)— a pioneering cross-sector partnership designed to serve as a coordinated, unified, regional approach to produce, preserve and protect a full spectrum of housing that fosters communities of opportunity accessible to all Fairfield County residents. We have granted over \$500,000 annually to organizations working to ensure that all Fairfield County residents have safe, stable, and affordable housing in communities of opportunity.

Fairfield County has an estimated shortage of more than 25,000 affordable units, and cost-burden rates for both renters and homeowners are growing. According to our recently released [Fairfield County Community Wellbeing Index 2023](#), between 2020 and 2022, Fairfield County home prices and rental rates have increased 32% and 22%, respectively, making our affordable housing issue even more challenging. These trends have widened the already significant homeownership gaps in our community.

More investment is needed to address Fairfield County's and Connecticut's housing crisis. We, alongside many other partners in the state, know that affordable housing funding is an investment in Connecticut's economy – creating jobs, increasing household incomes, and generating new tax revenue. In addition, a greater supply of affordable homes prevents homelessness and reliance by our most vulnerable residents on other expensive systems of care and safety net programs, saving the state money.

**Fairfield County's Community Foundation respectfully requests that the committee support the proposed new bond authorizations for the following:**

- **State Housing Trust Fund (HTF) funded at \$200 million in both FY24 and 25**
- **Affordable Housing Fund (FLEX Fund) at \$100 million in both FY24 and 25**

These investments will also support the critical revitalization of affordable homes in the State-Sponsored Housing Portfolio. Our affordable housing stock is aging and in need of repair. Additionally, approximately 5000 units

annually are reaching the end of their affordability cycle. Therefore, we must maintain our existing stock and create new affordable housing.

Research shows that state investment in 100 units of affordable multifamily homes generates \$14.5 million in income while supporting 165 jobs during construction. In each year, the 100-unit development generates \$3.8 million in income and supports 42 jobs. An investment in affordable housing is an investment in Connecticut's economic vitality.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **Testimony in Support of S.B. 980 – An Act Authorizing And Adjusting Bonds Of The State**

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Julian Pierce, Director of Economic Opportunity, at [jpierce@fccfoundation.org](mailto:jpierce@fccfoundation.org) or 203-750-3244.