



Testimony in Support of H.B. 6831- AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSIT-ORIENTED COMMUNITIES

Planning & Development Committee

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Mendi Blue Paca

President & CEO, Fairfield County's Community Foundation

Chair Kavros-DeGraw, Chair Rahman, Ranking Member Zullo, Ranking Member Gordon, and esteemed Connecticut General Assembly members of the Planning & Development Committee, Fairfield County's Community Foundation is grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony supporting **H.B. 6831 An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Communities** (also referred to as Work Live Ride).

Fairfield County's Community Foundation serves twenty-three towns and cities, collaborating with organizations, businesses, and philanthropists to foster an equitable community where all residents can thrive, with a longstanding focus on addressing Fairfield County's affordable housing crisis. Our efforts have evolved from funding housing developments to driving systemic change, including helping establish the Fairfield County Collaborative Fund for Affordable Housing in 2006, which invested \$4.8 million to create over 1,000 affordable homes, benefiting 5,000 residents, generating nearly 1,400 jobs, and contributing \$472 million to the regional economy. We also played a key role in establishing Fairfield County's Center for Housing Opportunity (FCCHO) and annually grant over \$500,000 to advance safe, stable and affordable housing in our region.

Our investments reflect our belief that housing is fundamental to the overall health of a community. When people can readily access housing, it sets the stage for a vibrant society. It makes it easier to put down roots and support neighbors. It makes it easier for businesses to find and keep productive, skilled workers. It makes it easier for children to learn and thrive. And it means that older residents can continue to live and enjoy the community they call home. Unfortunately, when good housing is scarce or too expensive, it creates opposite conditions. The lack of quality, affordable housing triggers a host of challenges that create a crisis for some and negatively impacts quality of life for all.

Fairfield County ranks last in Connecticut in most key affordable housing measures. It is the most expensive housing market in the state and the most residentially segregated by income and race. In Fairfield County and statewide these conditions are leading to a dramatic rise in homelessness. The state's most recent point-in-time count of those experiencing homelessness has increased for three straight years.

We strongly support H.B. 6831 - An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Communities because it promotes housing supply growth through practical land-use reforms, fostering economic development and improving access to jobs and transit for our community members. Last session, the Connecticut House passed the bill with ninety votes, and it had Governor Lamont's support before time ran out in the Senate. Passing Work, Live, Ride will further economic growth, increase housing options, reduce traffic congestion, and lower pollution levels.

Work Live Ride is a vital step toward expanding housing opportunities for all members of our communities. It aligns with Fairfield County's Community Foundation's mission to ensure all residents have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing. We urge the passage of this bill to help create a more inclusive, thriving Fairfield County.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **in support of H.B. 6831 - An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Communities.**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Lutonya Russell-Humes, Vice President of Grants and Programs, lrussell-humes@fccfoundation.org, 203-750-3223.

Sincerely,

Mendi Blue Paca
President & CEO