



## OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN

**Michael R. Criss**  
**First Selectman, Town of Harwinton**

### ***HOUSING COMMITTEE***

February 18, 2021

Good Afternoon, my name is Michael R. Criss, I am the First Selectman for the Town of Harwinton and I am submitting testimony regarding H.B. 5683 "An Act Concerning Affordable Housing."

#### **H.B. 5683 "An Act Concerning Affordable Housing"**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and submit testimony on proposed H.B. 5683 "An Act Concerning Affordable Housing." The Town of Harwinton is in favor of this proposed bill as submitted with some suggested additional language and changes.

This bill would adjust the Affordable Housing Act threshold to allow housing units that are not deed restricted but capable of purchase by persons or families whose annual income is 80% of the area median income based on the prevailing interest rate and appraised values of properties in effect as of the prior grand list year allowing them to be included.

We believe the threshold should be adjusted to reflect a more realistic picture of the true number of affordable housing units in a municipality. There are numerous homes and rental units in all our communities and across the state that may not be deed restricted but are certainly affordable. By adjusting the threshold to reflect and include these housing units will be critical to understanding and responding to Connecticut's affordable housing needs. Harwinton would also like to see a genuine effort made to adjust the 10% affordable housing threshold to acknowledge that a 10% threshold is not achievable for many small communities like ours. Communities like ours are unable to increase the number of affordable housing units due to non-existent public waste water or water systems and/or capacity, inadequate soil conditions to support waste removal, environmentally sensitive lands such as watersheds, forests, etc., and to incorporate the Blue Ribbon study done in the 1990s which requires the protection of such land to provide quality drinking water to the urban areas and reduce contamination of these waterways.

The Town of Harwinton currently shares some waste water amenities with the City of Torrington and is restricted and limited to 250 users in an area of town where septic and soil conditions would not allow for reconstruction of private waste water systems. With that said, Harwinton is further restricted with strict waste water capacities to the City of Torrington to prevent overrun and river contamination.

## **TOWN OF HARWINTON**

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Pursuant to Section 8-30j, CGS, the Town of Harwinton is preparing an Affordable Housing Plan by the spring of 2022. The plan will include a housing needs assessment and consider the role of local and regional housing conditions on affordable housing development. However, this plan should also be allowed to include housing that is not deed restricted to provide a more realistic assessment of the number of affordable housing units in a community.

All of these efforts will allow our municipality to have a strong foundation in supporting the development of more affordable and more attainable housing to meet the needs of our community. We encourage and look forward to the opportunity to work with you and others to truly analyze the housing needs of Connecticut with realistic numbers and requirements.

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on behalf of the Town of Harwinton. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

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General Assembly

January Session, 2021

**Proposed Bill No. 5683**

LCO No. 2009



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Referred to Committee on HOUSING

Introduced by:

REP. ZULLO, 99th Dist.

REP. ZAWISTOWSKI, 61st Dist.

REP. POLLETTA, 68th Dist.

REP. WOOD, 141st Dist.

**AN ACT CONCERNING AFFORDABLE HOUSING.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

- 1 That subsection (k) of section 8-30g of the general statutes be
- 2 amended to add "(6) not deed restricted but capable of purchase by
- 3 persons or families whose annual income is eighty per cent of the area
- 4 median income based on the prevailing interest rate and appraised
- 5 values of properties in effect as of the prior grand list year."

**Statement of Purpose:**

To add additional types of properties exempted from the affordable housing appeals procedure.