

Housing Quality and Safety: Increasing Inspection Capacity

Much of Connecticut's multifamily housing stock is old and in disrepair. Forty percent of Connecticut's rental housing was built prior to 1960.

In most towns in Connecticut, tenants are responsible for submitting complaints regarding unsafe or unhealthy living conditions in their apartment or building.

This puts tenants at risk for retaliatory action from landlords and serves as a deterrent to reporting poor inadequate housing conditions.

When reports are made, limited inspection capacity means that citations are often unenforced.

The Need

Poor housing conditions are linked to increases in asthma, lead poisoning, lung cancer, and unintentional injuries leading to increased health costs, poor school performance, missed school and workdays, and even death.

Even when tenants do report concerns about their living conditions, towns and cities often do not have enough capacity to respond and monitor progress towards addressing the violations and improving housing conditions.

Solution

Create a \$5 million pilot program to support additional housing inspection and enforcement capacity in municipalities with a proactive residential rental licensing or inspection program that require regular inspections without the need for tenants' complaints and ensure landlords compliance with local health and housing code ordinances.

Impact

Where cities have codified proactive residential rental licensing or inspection regimes, a program of \$2.5 million per year would provide for additional staff and resources to carry out inspections and enforce violations.

This would help ensure that CT's cities and towns have the capacity and ability to proactively respond in a timely and on-going manner to resolve housing quality and safety concerns, and remove from tenants the burden of maintaining safe, stable housing options.

Research shows that improving the quality of housing:

- Reduces the health problems associated with poor quality housing by limiting exposure to allergens, neurotoxins and other dangers associated with safety.
- Reduces stressors and the associated physical and mental health problems.
- Contributes to neighborhood stability and maintaining the local property tax base.