

# Planning and Development Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** HB-5505 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF CERTAIN COMMERCIAL  
WAREHOUSES FOR THE HOUSING OR SHELTER OF PERSONS.

**Vote Date:** 3/13/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/11/2026

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Planning and Development

### REASONS FOR BILL:

HB 5505's main goal is to further define the term "commercial warehouse" as it implies to building and or structures that exceeds twenty-five thousand square feet, and is designed for, or has previously been used for, the importation, storage, or distribution of goods in commerce. This bill enforces that all municipalities must issue approval before transforming commercial warehouses into housing facilities or shelters.

This is to ensure that individuals who are housed in commercial warehouses have continued access to safe drinking water, heat/cooling systems, and proper sleep arrangements.

### SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

The substitute language clarifies that such warehouses are not prohibited from use as a cooling or warming shelter, exempts existing such uses of commercial warehouses from the permit process, allows a municipality to designate the permitting authority, and clarifies that municipalities may adopt an ordinance to prohibit permits for such use of commercial warehouses.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**Stamford Norwalk United with Immigrants, Member, Robert Pratt** supports HB 5505 as he believes it will provide needed oversight by municipalities to ensure the conversion of commercial warehouses into housing spaces.

**Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association, Government Relations Officer, John Guskowski** strongly supports HB 5505 as they believe it would provide necessary safeguards for warehouses to be converted to housing structures to prevent straining local infrastructure and public health threats. He continues that this bill would be requiring reasonable standards that would uphold public health safety for individuals living in these housing facilities/shelters.

**Vicki Volper** supports HB 5505 as she believes it would create needed checks on CT properties that would ensure individuals in these spaces are living in a habitable and safe environment. She states that no federal enforcement priority overrides the basic obligation to treat people humanely while on Connecticut soil.

**Jonathan Tunik** supports HB 5505 as she believes it would ensure safe living conditions in large commercial warehouses converted into housing facilities or shelters. She continues by saying how she supports the bill's intent but has a few recommendations of her own.

**University of Connecticut, Student, Hanna Testa** supports HB 5505 as she believes it will help ensure the safety of those suffering from homelessness. She encourages the committee to think about how this bill will be implemented that wouldn't create additional barriers for individuals affected by homelessness.

**Guilford Planning and Zoning and Affordable Housing Commissions, Commissioner, Larry Rizzolo** supports HB 5505 as he believes it will help address the issue of transition housing for the homeless. He described a program called the Christian Community Action whose goal is to help households address the barriers of housing, income, employment, health, and childcare/education.

**Douglas Penn** strongly supports HB 5505 as he believes that any CT community would not want to have federal detention facility/prisons in their town/city. He explains that over the past 20 years, ICE detention facilities have had numerous cases of detainees being denied health treatment with many of them passing away due to such actions. Mr. Penn believes that each community should be able to decide if they want a prison built in town/city.

**Connecticut Council of Small Towns, Executive Director, Betsy Gara** supports HB 5505 as she believes it will ensure facilities meet welfare and public health needs for communities in Connecticut.

**Anonymous 997** strongly supports HB 5505 as they believe there needs to be urgent checks of CT properties being turned into detention centers. In addition, reinforcing state property codes, health regulations and human rights in Connecticut.

**Anonymous** supports HB 5505 as they believe it would be a proactive step to creating restrictive measures for commercial warehouses being used for immigration purposes. They continue to state that the inhumane conditions in immigration facilities needs to come to an end. HB 5055 would help addressing a very serious issue in the United States.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Cynthia Steckler** strongly opposes HB 5505 as she believes the democrat supermajority will pass it regardless.

**Christine Sinopoli** opposes HB 5505.

**Western Connecticut Council of Governments, Executive Director, Francis Pickering** offers perspectives into HB 5505 as he believe converting large commercial warehouses for housing facilities would raise questions regarding building safety fire protection, sanitation and infrastructure capacity. In addition, confining permits within the municipal health and safety framework would be beneficial as it would ensure public health and safety. He continues that a possible approach for approving permits would be issued by a municipal building official in addition to the local health director and fire marshal.

**Anonymous 999** opposes HB 5505 and politely requests to decrease the number of bills to seven.

**Anonymous 1010** opposes HB 5505 as they believe local approval should be decided by municipalities and not the state government.

**Reported by: Christian Talarski**

**Date: 3/19/26**