

# Planning and Development Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** SB-363 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT ALLOWING MUNICIPALITIES TO IMPOSE COMMERCIAL VACANCY  
**Title:** ASSESSMENTS IN CERTAIN DISTRICTS.

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

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/4/2026

**File No.:**

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Planning and Development Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill allows municipalities, by ordinance, to impose an assessment on commercial properties that remain vacant for more than 180 days within designated districts.

SB 363 seeks to give municipalities a greater ability to impose fee's on vacant commercial buildings so that the property owner is more inclined to lease or sell the property and revitalize downtowns that are often plagued by these vacant buildings.

### SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

The substitute language allows the board of selectmen in certain municipalities to approve ordinances concerning such assessments, allows a municipality to define areas in which such assessment may be applied rather than adopting districts, restricts the applicability of such assessments to commercial real property located at ground level, and requires a municipality that imposes such assessments to use funds collected through such assessments to improve the defined area adopted by the municipality.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**Town of Harwinton, First Selectman, Michael R. Criss:** supports this bill while providing concerns and recommendations. While he supports the bills application only to specific properties he offers concerns to the fixed assessment rate, definition of "vacant," administrative capacity, and market conditions. Overall, they support the bills intent to provide municipalities with flexibility but recommends additional clarity and further flexibility in a few areas.

**Town of New Hartford, First Selectman, Daniel V. Jerram:** supports this bill and adds this provides a needed legal remedy for municipalities to push unresponsive landlords to improve or lease their dormant properties. He offers an amendment to allow municipalities whose legislative body is a town meeting to authorize board of selectmen to immediately authorize vacancy assessments.

**City of Groton, Mayor, Jill Rusk:** supports this bill and appreciates the legislation in its attempt to strengthen the downtown business districts and promote economic development. She adds the city of Groton supports these additional tools to deal with these vacant properties.

**Connecticut Council of Small Towns, Executive Director, Betsy Gara:** supports this bill and supports the intent to impose vacancy assessments on commercial properties that have continued to be left vacant. It gives municipalities a tool to ensure the owner maintains the property or sells/leases it.

**CCM, Advocacy Manager, Zachary McKeown:** supports this bill and its intent to allow municipalities to utilize commercial vacancy assessment to help towns deal with long-term vacant and abandon commercial properties.

**First Town Downtown, Executive Director, Debra DeLucia:** supports this bill and adds that Windsor Center has long been marred by long-term vacancies. And appreciates the mechanism provided by the legislation to give towns an ability to address this issue. They offer changes relating to ground-level targeting and district focused on down towns.

**Connecticut Main Street, Executive Director, Michelle McCabe:** supports the bill and notes that many Connecticut downtowns suffer from persistent vacant storefronts that hurt property values and community vitality. They appreciate the legislation for giving municipalities a new tool to address long-term commercial vacancies. They suggest narrowing the policy to designated downtown districts and focusing on ground-level storefronts.

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

**Robert Nyilas:** opposes this bill as a stakeholder in the state's housing market. He argues this bill is a "money grab" and puts increased and unfair pressure on landlords for circumstances beyond their control. They argue this bill will make small-scale hosing more difficult and decrease overall quality of housing. He urges opposition.

**CT Realtors, General Council, Jim Heckman:** Comments on this bill and is concerned that the further penalization could push properties towards foreclosure and bankruptcy. They argue some the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a loss in interest in commercial

properties with increased costs. They argue that property owners do not want vacancies but that the current market is the root cause.

**Reported by: Christian Talarski**

**Date: 3/16/26**