

CEO Message

By Jim Perras, CEO of HBRA of CT



This year's legislative session is proving to be a busy one with a focus on housing unlike anything we've seen in recent years. It began with the Governor's State Budget Address which pledged to grow the economy through investments in workforce housing. In addition, he pledged to increase housing units by 6,400 units in the next biennium by incentivizing transit-oriented development and urged municipal leaders to create friendlier zoning and expedited approvals and spark production. The result of this heightened interest in housing policy was the publication of nearly 400 proposed bills being tracked by our team that, if passed, would directly or indirectly impact our industry.

It is well understood amongst policymakers that Connecticut finds itself amid a housing affordability and accessibility crisis. While we welcome the public discourse surrounding housing, we also see forces at work that, although well intended, would make it more difficult for our industry to produce the housing needed to meet the needs of Connecticut residents. Examples include rent control measures that would result in even more restrictive lending and higher equity requirements causing many multifamily projects currently in the planning phase to not pencil out or stretch codes that would make it even more expensive to build in towns that adopt them.

During the start of this legislative session, one thing has become abundantly clear, proponents of policies that would negate our efforts to build much needed housing have never been more organized or engaged. They are showing up en masse at committee meetings and public hearings providing persuasive testimony. We will never beat them at a numbers game, but it is imperative that our advocacy continues to evolve to meet these challenges. It is our responsibility to educate legislators and the public on issues impacting our industry and to be the voice of reason when public discourse surrounding housing can so often become heated and clouded by emotion. Now more than ever, we must be the industry experts depended upon by state officials and policymakers. If not us, then who?

In January, we partnered with the Connecticut Association of Realtors to facilitate a successful joint informational forum before the Housing, Planning & Development, and Insurance & Real Estate Committees. A presentation on the state of housing production in the state of Connecticut was provided by NAHB Chief Economist, Dr. Dietz. And National Association of Realtors, Deputy Chief Economist Jessica Lutz presented on the state of housing sales in Connecticut. Their combined presentations were sobering for the audience of legislators that learned about the shockingly low inventory and how over a decade of low housing production is directly impacting the current housing crisis. The presentations were very well received, and the data and statistics provided have since been cited often in debate and conversations surrounding discussions of housing policy throughout the legislative session.

Forums like these and HBRA meetings with legislative leaders are crucial, but they aren't enough, not this year. Developers, builders, remodelers, and the businesses that support the residential construction industry must all step up and be heard. Your local legislator needs to hear from you directly. As their constituents, they must be made to understand how the policies they are considering will impact businesses in their districts. **The HBRA implores you to respond to our Calls to Action when you see them (Sign up for text alerts by texting: HBRCT to 50457).** Get to know your local legislators, write opinion pieces in your local paper, join us for our regularly scheduled government affairs meetings. Sitting back on your laurels and hoping for the best is no longer an option.

If you want to get involved but don't know where to start, please contact us at admin@hbact.org. ■