



**HOME BUILDERS & REMODELERS ASSOCIATION  
OF CONNECTICUT, INC.**

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*Your Home  
Is Our  
Business*

March 1, 2016

To: Senator Joan V. Hartley, Co-Chair  
Representative Chris Perone, Co-Chair  
Members of the Commerce Committee

From: Bill Ethier, CAE, Chief Executive Officer

Re: **Support for HB 5424, AAC the Implementation of the Learn Here,  
Live Here Program**

The HBRA of Connecticut is a professional trade association with about eight hundred (800) member firms statewide employing tens of thousands of CT's citizens. Our members, all small businesses, are residential and commercial builders, land developers, remodelers, general contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and those businesses and professionals that provide services to our diverse industry and to consumers. We build between 70% to 80% of all new homes and apartments in the state each year and engage in countless home remodeling projects.

**We support HB 5424 as it will require the implementation of the Learn Here, Live Here Program.** The program does nobody any good if it exists only in statute. We are conflicted in our support as we recognize the troubling financial state we are in and this program would divert some income taxes to this special fund. We are also concerned that once money is in the fund, what is the guarantee that a future legislature will not raid the fund to close future budget deficits? These issues need to be worked through as the program is important to address the "brain drain" Connecticut faces, the loss of our young adults who would otherwise be Connecticut's future.

When implemented, the program would encourage students to save for their first home. A home purchase is a life changing event and home ownership is still desired by many young adults. This program will also help the real estate and housing industries, bell weathers for a healthy economy. First time buyers, particularly young buyers, face the triple hurdle of 1) obtaining a well paying job, 2) making payments on their school debt, and 3) handling the other high costs of living here. The Learn Here, Live Here program is a well conceived savings and incentive program to help achieve home ownership and get our young people to set roots in Connecticut, which will lead to a stronger state economy and community. Let's get it started.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our views on this important topic.