

March 3rd, 2021

Dear Chair Lopes and Chair McGee, Vice Chair Anwar, Vice Chair Smith, Ranking Member Cicarella, Ranking Member Polletta, and Distinguished Members of the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Housing Committee:

My name is Megan Levan, and I am a Middletown resident and Wesleyan University student. I am writing to urge members of the committee to support H.B. 6531, An Act Concerning the Right to Counsel in Eviction Proceedings and S.B. 194, An Act Establishing a Right to Housing. Both of these bills would, in part, contribute to forwarding the goal of housing equity in Connecticut, by preventing unjust evictions and by affirming the state's commitment to shelter for all of its residents.

It is deeply unfortunate that the US Supreme Court has declined to guarantee tenants' constitutional right to civil defense. Connecticut should extend the protections of *Gideon v. Wainwright* to tenants statewide, as other progressive jurisdictions have already done with great success. Universal right to counsel, even without income caps, empowers low-income people¹ and can prevent the moral and civic failure of houselessness.

As is, I am strongly in support of the provisions of H.B. 6531, as well as the values demonstrated in S.B. 194. However, I am also aware that the two together do not go nearly far enough in affecting housing affordability or the climate catastrophe accelerated by the construction of inefficient and exclusionary suburbs.² In addition to the legalization of ADUs, in the interest of reducing the state's carbon footprint and addressing some part of its legacy of redlining and segregation, I would also like to see a large-scale reduction in local control over new development (especially designated affordable development), statewide zoning floors guaranteeing construction of up to four stories statewide and up to ten stories along transit corridors, the elimination of the racist policy³⁴ of single family zoning through universal legalization of fourplexes, and the elimination of parking minimums.⁵

For these reasons, I ask and encourage all members of the Connecticut General Assembly to pass HB-6531 and SB-194.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Megan Levan
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<https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2019/0730/Meet-the-eviction-defenders-helping-to-keep-tenants-at-home>

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<https://news.berkeley.edu/2014/01/06/suburban-sprawl-cancels-carbon-footprint-savings-of-dense-urban-cores/>

³ <https://www.kqed.org/news/11840548/the-racist-history-of-single-family-home-zoning>

⁴ <https://www.psychousing.org/news/ct-makes-list-most-segregated-school-districts-nation>

⁵ <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2018/05/01/youre-no-climate-mayor-if-youre-not-doing-these-four-things/>