

To: CT General Assembly Planning & Development Committee

From: Ariana Baurley, East Rock, New Haven

Re: **SB 1024**, An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications Of Certain Land Use Officials And Certain Sewage Disposal Systems

Date: March 15, 2021

*Chairman Cassano, Chairwoman McCarthy Vahey, Vice Chairman Needleman, Vice Chairwoman Goupil, Ranking Member Senator Hwang, Ranking Member Zullo, and Members of the Committee:*

I wholeheartedly support **SB 1024**. I believe that this is an incredible opportunity for you all to take real, concrete steps to begin to undo the generations of discriminatory zoning that has defined the landscape in CT. We all know, by now, about how discriminatory zoning and redlining and steering by real estate agents and income-based school system funding conspire to keep low-income people stuck in cycles of poverty. These problems are bigger than CT, and they have their roots in the anti-Black and anti-immigrant discrimination of Reconstruction. These problems run deep. It is immoral to continue to deprive large swaths of our fellow CT residents of opportunity by allowing exclusionary zoning to perpetuate inequality. We have to take decisive action to build more equitable landscapes for everyone.

We don't have time or room for the vast lawns of exclusionary cloistered communities anymore. It's clear that even those most exclusive communities don't have time to continue being exclusive, as they fail to grow and attract new residents. Housing is not a zero-sum game. **When the least among us are allowed to thrive, we all thrive.** This concept is especially important in our current age of uncertainty and extreme wealth maldistribution. Equitable zoning would be a good way to stimulate the growth of Black wealth, which when compared to white wealth in the US, remains extremely paltry.

There are infinite angles from which to come at this issue—healthcare, quality of life, job opportunity, environmental sustainability, etc. One particularly illuminating example is in education and child development. We still have a functionally segregated school system. Research shows that white students do better in racially heterogeneous schools, both on math tests and in later life. We need our schools to be integrated not only to benefit the white students, but obviously also to share the riches of traditionally white school districts with all of our residents as equitably as possible. When we wonder why there are still relatively few US students of color earning the most advanced degrees and running major companies and institutions, we should follow the chain and see that it begins with segregated elementary education. It is frankly embarrassing to still be as segregated as we are in 2021. Re-zoning according to **SB 1024** will begin to undo the seemingly insurmountable barriers to true integration.

We have the tools to begin to undo many of the material harms of racism. I hope that CT paves the way for every other state in the nation to meaningfully address issues of racial equity through zoning. We have so much to gain by taking careful steps to make zoning more equitable. All we have to lose is our present system of resource maldistribution that contains the seeds of its own destruction. Let's break out of this vicious cycle with **SB 1024**.

Sincerely,  
Ariana Baurley