

## TESTIMONY ON **SB 1024, SB 1026, and HB 6611**

**SB 1024 - AN ACT CONCERNING ZONING AUTHORITY, CERTAIN DESIGN GUIDELINES, QUALIFICATIONS OF CERTAIN LAND USE OFFICIALS AND CERTAIN SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS.**

**SB 1026 - AN ACT CONCERNING TRAINING FOR CERTAIN PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICIALS.**

**HB 6611 - AN ACT CONCERNING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND OTHER POLICIES REGARDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT.**

Sent to [pdtestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:pdtestimony@cga.ct.gov) on March 14, 2021

Dear Chairman Cassano, Chairwoman McCarthy Vahey, Vice Chairman Needleman, Vice Chairwoman Goupil, Ranking Member Senator Hwang, Ranking Member Zullo, and Distinguished Members of the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Planning and Development Committee:

As a resident of the Whitneyville neighborhood of Hamden and a member of the Spring Forward housing equity group in the Spring Glen neighborhood, I am writing in support of SB 1024, HB 6611, and SB 1026. These three bills address the historic structural racism in Connecticut housing. Our state's exclusionary zoning laws are well documented, and have been used for decades to maintain historic patterns of segregation. I strongly support zoning law reforms like SB 1024 and SB 1026, which can make our neighborhoods more diverse, more vibrant, and more cohesive. In addition, we must confront the consequence of longtime housing discrimination, a lack of affordable housing in Connecticut, and the massive racial and economic disparities that housing inequity perpetuates. That's why the Fair Share Zoning practices laid out in HB 6611 must also be passed if we hope to achieve truly effective reform.

SB 1024 offers important first steps, including the allowance of smaller multi-family units and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in Hamden and other towns. Village-based neighborhoods like Whitneyville were built to accommodate socioeconomic diversity, but zoning has become increasingly prohibitive toward affordable housing. Hamden, like more than half of Connecticut towns, allows for ADUs, but the additional restrictions applied to ADUs often make them unfeasible to build, own or occupy. For those concerned about property values, there is evidence that ADUs can increase property values and help low- and middle-income homeowners to generate additional income and wealth.

Transit-oriented development is also an issue in many towns. For example, the Spring Glen neighborhood in Hamden has a very large, mostly unused parking lot along our transit corridor. The lot takes up desirable real estate due to overly restrictive zoning that effectively prohibits development.

I also strongly support mandatory commissioner training as set out in SB 1024 and SB 1026 – including education on the historic housing discrimination in Connecticut. Many commissioners are unaware that the neighborhoods they oversee – including in Hamden – were once segregated *by law*.

Finally, I support HB 6611's Fair Share Zoning practices that provide towns with tools to provide the affordable housing that is required by federal law to remediate decades of discriminatory

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housing law. While local governance is important, local decisions have perpetuated social injustice and economic inequity. Towns must be held responsible for creating the abundant, diversified housing that we need, and this bill will enable them to do so. This will also benefit our state. Open Communities Alliance estimates that the 300,000 market-rate and affordable housing units generated through Fair Share Zoning over 10 years will generate \$59 billion in new income for Connecticut residents, \$12 billion in state and local tax revenue, and over 80,000 jobs.

SB 1024, HB 1166, and SB 1026 in combination will make our communities more diverse, more vibrant, and more cohesive. I hope you will support these bills.

Sincerely,

Dave Bechtel  
Hamden, CT