

To: CT General Assembly Planning & Development Committee

From: Rev. Kelly Jane Caesar, resident of Manchester, Connecticut

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 write in support of SB 1024 as a young professional, a pastor of a multi-racial, multi-generational church, and recent homeowner.

As the state seeks to attract and retain young professionals like myself, this bill will provide more diverse and affordable housing for those in entry-level positions and more environmentally friendly housing (by requiring housing near Main Streets and public transit) for the many in my generation who are more eco-conscious. Towns across the state will benefit, as young professionals who start out in more affordable housing eventually buy more expensive homes and invest more deeply in the towns. That is what happened to me. My husband and I chose to buy a home in Manchester after renting an apartment near Main Street for five years. While we could afford to live in more expensive towns, we stayed in Manchester because we got to know and love the town while living in more affordable housing. What we loved was the ability to walk to Main Street for various events, explore local parks and green spaces, and the multi-racial make-up of the town. **SB 1024 will enable more towns across the state to provide attractive housing options to young professionals seeking affordable housing that allows for more eco-friendly living.**

As the Senior Pastor of First Congregational Church of East Hartford, the oldest church in town, I also support SB 1024 as a means for our state to enact racial and economic equality in housing, benefitting everyone. As a person of faith, I believe it is our moral imperative to provide each person the opportunity to flourish and grow. When a state, through its zoning laws, concentrates its poor people, many of whom, due to centuries of systemic racism and discrimination, are people of color, we stunt the growth of residents across the state. Those with less financial means and/or people of color are not provided the resources and mentorship to encourage their full potential. Those with more financial means are isolated from the realities of the world, offered a false sense of superiority, and deprived of opportunities to collaborate in a multi-cultural setting (a crucial skill in our increasingly globalized world). **SB 1024 would provide more diverse and more affordable housing options, which allows for economically and racially diverse communities – which benefits people of every economic and racial background.**

When I ask my congregants why they chose to live in East Hartford – or stay in East Hartford – the answer I most often receive is that the racial diversity of the town has enriched and prepared their children to be leaders and active citizens in a globalized, multi-cultural world. Every town in Connecticut ought to offer its young people such a rich opportunity, not only because it will allow them to become more successful in the workforce, but because it is the morally right thing to do.

Please do not hesitate to move forward with SB 1024 and provide more diverse housing options across the state. Every town deserves to benefit from the impacts diverse and affordable housing can have.