

To: Planning & Development Committee

From: Julia Carey-Ruiz/West Hartford

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:

My name is Julia Carey-Ruiz. I live in West Hartford and I support SB 1024. I am a volunteer with DesegregateCT. Growing up in Waterford, just over 2 miles from New London, I became aware of racial and economic segregation and the inequalities that stem from it at a pretty young age. I noticed the difference in the quality of schools when I went to swim meets in New London and when I volunteered for an afterschool tutoring program. The quality of housing in parts of the city was far worse than anything I'd see in Waterford. I live in West Hartford now and I see the same injustices when I compare the quality of housing, schools, and other public amenities in Hartford to West Hartford. The relationship between the cities and the suburbs is the same all over Connecticut and it makes me angry and sad. This is just one of the reasons I support this bill and have been volunteering with DesegregateCT. This bill would mitigate the racial and economic segregation that continues to poison our society.

Besides addressing racial and economic segregation, this bill would make Connecticut a more welcome place for young people, which the state desperately needs. Last summer, my cousin, fresh out of college was hired for a job in Waterford, Connecticut and the most appealing town within commuting distance for him as a 22 year old was West Hartford—there was no closer town that was somewhat within his price range that was as lively. It turns out that West Hartford ended up being too expensive as well so now he is living in his parent's basement and looking for a job in Boston. More commercial corridors with multifamily housing across the state would create more vibrant centers appealing to young people and more affordable places for them to live.

Finally, as a professional transit planner, I care deeply about improving transit in our state. Without denser pockets of development across the state, we can not increase transit service levels. Transit in our state is funded in part by the state and federal government but it is also funded by fares. If there aren't enough people using the service, service levels can't be increased. If there isn't concentrated development, there can't be more efficient, faster running bus routes with reliable service. Not only does it not make financial sense, it's also just bad planning—resources should be directed to where there is demand. I chose to live where I did in part because there is a bus stop right across from my house. I know a lot of other people my age in New York and other cities who would never move somewhere where they would need to be car-dependent. Most towns in Connecticut do not meet this standard.

Please pass SB 1024—it will do a lot to make Connecticut a more equitable, economically stable, and vibrant place to live.