

Testimony in support of:

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

Submitted by:  
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Haddam, CT

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

My name is Cary Chadwick. I am a life-long resident of the suburban town of Haddam, Connecticut. I am testifying in favor of SB 1024, An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualification Of Certain Land Use Officials And Certain Sewage Disposal Systems.

In addition to being an educator and a professional, I am also a mother, a partner, an active member of my community, and a volunteer with Desegregate CT, a coalition of nonprofits who have put a tremendous amount of effort into researching, educating, and advocating for creating abundant and diverse housing across Connecticut.

My contribution to the Desegregate CT effort came in the form of research. As a GIS professional, my skills in mapping and understanding geographic information were put to use to help inform the discussion about land use and zoning patterns across Connecticut. This was achieved through a careful and comprehensive look at data from our cities and towns. Over the course of four months, a team of volunteers went town by town, combing through and cataloging over 32,000 pages of complicated zoning regulations. In tandem with that effort, I lead a group of GIS volunteers in collecting, and in some cases, creating, the spatial data files that delineate the 2,620 zoning districts and two additional subdivision districts across Connecticut. This was no small feat and perhaps a story for an additional conversation about how GIS data and information is handled in our state. The end result, however, was the Connecticut Zoning Atlas, a first of its kind interactive mapping tool that allows anyone to visualize how each town regulates residential housing and the barriers that exist to creating diverse and affordable housing in our cities and towns.

As an educator and mapping enthusiast, I often repeat the mantra, "maps tell a story". In this case, the Zoning Atlas tells an undeniable one about how exclusionary zoning laws have determined who typically lives where in our state. A quick look at the Atlas will show that over 90% of land in Connecticut allows for single family homes to be built by right. By contrast, only 2% of land is zoned to allow four-unit or more dwellings.

In my town, Haddam, 95% of the zoned municipal area allows for single or two-family homes, however these are subject to minimum home sizes, and with the exception of 4% of that area, a minimum lot size of 2 acres. Three and four family housing is allowed on only 1% of all of the zoned area in Haddam and accessory dwelling units are only allowed after a public hearing and are subject to physical and occupancy requirements. Although it's not talked about much in Haddam, these things do work in tandem with other forces to lock out low and even middle income individuals from joining our community, as well as young adults who want to move out of the family home, or elderly who want to downsize and age in place.

The truth is, you don't need the Zoning Atlas to understand what kind of impact these regulations have had over time on our community and others like it. I was raised in Haddam and attended our local public school. I could count the number of Black, Indigenous, Multiracial, and People of Color in my graduating class on one hand. I still live in Haddam because I am privileged enough to have benefited from generational wealth that has allowed my husband and I to build a home on land that has been in my family since the early 1980's. We are now raising our two children in this town. The school system is excellent, the natural spaces are plentiful, and the people are wonderful. However, there is no denying that we are not a diverse community. We are 92% white with a median household income of \$110,000. I support SB 1024 because I want my children to grow up in a vibrant space that values diversity and equitable, inclusive neighborhoods. I want their graduating class to better reflect the diverse makeup of our state. I want the opportunities that Haddam affords my family to be available to all that want to live here. If we are really serious about changing the structural and procedural practices that have contributed to economic and racial segregation in Haddam and across Connecticut, then I believe that we need to prioritize zoning reform now. I strongly urge this committee to support SB 1024.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

*Cary Chadwick*

Cary Chadwick  
Haddam, CT