

Hello, my name is Bob Chester and I am from Somers, CT. I'm just an engaged citizen that is active in local government and opposed to SB1024 and its related bills. Not because I'm a racist, or because I'm afraid or change resistant but because these bills will not deliver on the justices of desegregation and increased affordable housing as promised.

I learned much from the 24-hour hearing, but I'm honestly now more concerned by these bills and frustrated by some of the public testimony. Its very troubling for me to listen to 24-hours of mischaracterizations about our States History and who we are by a small group of purported experts, siloed academic extremists and singularly impassioned Advocacy Groups.

It's a state that has been the only place my family has ever called home since arriving here from Lithuania in the early 1900's and starting a small farm in Broad Brook USA. My grandfather was one of 10 kids. All of them valued hard work and prized top educational performance. My grandfather's dad was Jewish and mom was catholic and they raised their kids under the catholic faith. It was said that he was a workhorse that loved America and often reminded his kids about the unrest in his native country. Apparently, he only required 3-4 hours of sleep, often exclaimed "plenty of time to sleep when you're dead!" and worked multiple jobs to send his kids to college. He was hard-nosed but fair and the kids developed the necessary disciplines. My grandfather's dad, a farmer, sent 8 of his kids to ivy league colleges and Americanized the Slavic family name to avoid discrimination and improve the kids chances of success. My grandfather broke his back from a farming accident at 13 that required him to walk on the back of his hands to avoid the wheelchair. He graduated top of his class from Columbia and went on to start-up and run an insurance agency, CPA firm and development company. He was a deacon at church, a husband, a father and funded many programs in the local schools. He always said god sees no color and we are all equally his children. My family was never silent on racism.

I know of no one anywhere who does not support everything, and anything related to the justice inherent in desegregation and increasing affordable housing. But, it's clear that these proposed bills, as currently constructed, will not achieve these very important goals.

If you really want to de-segregate and increase affordable housing in rural Connecticut, try being honest.

To deliver the results you seek, you will need to address the following (3) deficiencies within these bills:

- (1) A clear and straightforward town specific and market-based definition of affordable housing. The existing definition is unfair to markets, market values, specific towns, average incomes, and the reality of housing options.
- (2) Establishing for each town its specific target thresholds for affordable housing and creating a calculator for each town's use to determine their target amount and any deficiencies based on their total housing portfolios. This formula would require that you include things like town specific rental and purchase price median market values, AMI, housing stock and total market housing measures. The Feds create these calculators all the time in healthcare. When legislature create complicated policies, they help to ensure fairness, an equal standard of measurability and effective implementation.
- (3) Devising a necessary state subsidy program to deficient towns because investors and developers will not build below market values unless they are subsidized.

I think improving inclusivity and diversity throughout small town Connecticut is possible, but it is going to require complete honesty and openness about the necessary solutions.

Thank you all of you for your marathon efforts and for allowing me to share this. The solution is always in the middle and may the cooler heads prevail!

Sincerely,

Bob Chester

Somers, CT