

*To:* CT General Assembly Planning & Development Committee

*From:* Kaya Chwals, Fairfield CT

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

*Date:* March 11, 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 am writing in support SB 1024. I believe zoning reform will positively impact my community and serve Connecticut well as increasing density and environmental concerns will call upon us to make substantial changes in the way we support ourselves and our neighbors.

As an educator who has worked in Title 1 public schools and alternative settings like hospitals, shelters and juvenile detention centers my entire career, I see seemingly intractable public health problems play out over generations. Children are provided unequal access to education based solely upon their zip code. Too often, this sets them up in a pipeline marked by deficit, aggression, and the stresses that poverty inflicts on physical health.

My fellow teachers and I wring our hands- when can we catch a student to divert them from this path? Is it by 8th grade? 3rd? Is preK our only shot? Placing the onus on a child to struggle through inequitable education, we hope enough afterschool activities change the way the world works while, in many cases, our children attend excellent schools only a few miles away.

Data around school integration is unmistakable. So is the kneejerk, furious and appalled reaction by families on both sides of forced integration. A myriad of arguments boil down to this: why should a child suffer upheaval simply to receive a quality education?

They shouldn't. Every child has the right to a safe home, a supportive school, and a society that is representative of the angels of our better nature. Abundant and diverse housing address the root of a problem whose repercussions are staggering.

I acknowledge there is a great deal of pearl-clutching by my neighbors, who will point out my backyard looks over a golf course. Truthfully, I'd rather look out at something that allows me to sleep better at night.

With gentle density, I could see a thriving area with community gardens and neighbors supporting each other. I'd see a multigenerational community. I'd witness the strength of our collective will directed not towards protecting those who already live well, but a testament to the fact that we all deserve what Connecticut has to offer.

I ask you to support SB 1024 and be seen as trailblazers. The issues it addresses will not go away, and I'd like to look back upon this time as the moment we decided to make long term choices for the better of every child in our community.