

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

My name is Christine Conway and I am a resident of Redding. I am also an MSW student at Sacred Heart University. I am testifying today in support of SB 1024 and appreciate this opportunity to share my voice.

Last year I interned at the Office of Adult Probation in Bridgeport. The probation officer I worked with was assigned a specific caseload of 18–24-year-old males. Most of our client base was composed of young men of color who had grown up and continued to live in the city of Bridgeport. Day after day, I sat with clients who had been involved in crime from their teenage years and had already cycled through juvenile detention and prison several times. They were hardened not only from their time spent within detention centers, but from their formative years growing up in the projects within Bridgeport. Most had not completed high school, witnessed violence and death on the streets, had parents that had also cycled through the criminal justice system, experienced food insecurity and extreme poverty. I saw these young men not as criminals, but as a sorely underserved population that lived in environments where life was a daily struggle to survive. Despite participating in the illegal activity that had led to their probation or incarceration, they were also products of their environment. An environment where they had less access to good paying jobs, unstable families, daily exposure to violence, attendance at schools that were so underfunded they often slipped through the cracks, and the kind of economic instability that breeds a sort of desperation that I, who have lived my life with the white privilege that sheltered me from all these factors, could only conceptualize.

As a social worker, I have committed to a Code of Ethics that requires I challenge social injustice. Scarcity of affordable housing in communities with abundant resources represents such injustice. I ask you today to vote in favor of SB 1024 so that we can take the important steps to create diversity and opportunity for all citizens of CT. With the passing of this critical legislation, we can begin the process of

creating an even playing field where we do not have communities who have so many young people whose futures are determined by where they live instead of who they are.

Thank you for your time today,

Christine Conway