

TESTIMONY ON **SB 1024, SB 1026, and HB 6611**

SB 1024 - AN ACT CONCERNING ZONING AUTHORITY, CERTAIN DESIGN GUIDELINES, QUALIFICATIONS OF CERTAIN LAND USE OFFICIALS AND CERTAIN SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS.

SB 1026 - AN ACT CONCERNING TRAINING FOR CERTAIN PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICIALS.

HB 6611 - AN ACT CONCERNING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND OTHER POLICIES REGARDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT.

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

I am a member of Spring Forward, a neighborhood group established to increase housing equity in Hamden.

We support SB 1024, HB 6611, and SB 1026.

In conjunction, these bills tackle the reason our group exists: to address the historic structural racism in Connecticut housing. Our state's exclusionary zoning laws are well documented, and have been used for decades to maintain historic patterns of segregation that were established early in the 20th century. Therefore, we strongly support zoning law reforms like SB 1024 and SB 1026, which can make our neighborhoods more diverse, more vibrant, and more cohesive. However, we must also confront the consequence of longtime housing discrimination—which is the dearth of affordable housing in Connecticut, and the massive racial and economic disparities that housing inequity perpetuates. That's why the Fair Share Zoning practices laid out in HB 6611 must also be passed if we hope to achieve truly effective reform.

- It could not be more clear that historically racist practices, abetted by outdated zoning, have kept Connecticut towns segregated and inequitable. Resolving this housing crisis will require a long term, multi-pronged approach. SB 1024 offers great first steps. Spring Forward supports the allowance of smaller multi-family units and accessory dwelling units in our neighborhood and others like it. Village-based neighborhoods like ours were built to accommodate socioeconomic diversity, but zoning has become increasingly prohibitive toward affordable housing. Hamden, like more than half of Connecticut towns, allows for ADUs; however the additional restrictions applied to ADUs often make them unfeasible to build, own or occupy.
- We strongly support the need for mandatory commissioner training, as set out in SB 1024 and SB 1026, though we recommend that additional training hours be devoted to educating commissioners on the history of housing discrimination in Connecticut, and their own localities. Many commissioners are unaware that the neighborhoods they oversee were once segregated *by law*, and that many zoning codes maintain Whites Only rules by default.
- Zoning reform is essential to addressing housing inequity, but it cannot, on its own, address the fact that Connecticut is one of the most racially, ethnically and economically segregated states in the nation. Because our massive disparities in education,

employment, and health are largely due to a long history of housing discrimination, Spring Forward strongly supports HB 6611 in conjunction with the zoning reforms above. The Fair Share Zoning practices set out in this bill provide towns the tools to actually provide the affordable housing that is required by federal law to remediate decades of discriminatory housing law. And while local governance is important, local decisions have perpetuated social injustice and economic inequity. Localities must be held responsible for creating the abundant, diversified housing that we need, and this bill will enable them to do so.

- As one of the most racially, ethnically and economically segregated states in the nation, Connecticut is home to massive disparities in education, employment, health, and more. Fair Share Zoning will contribute to equitable revitalization in cities and a greater array of housing choices for groups like Black and Latino families who have historically faced and continue to face barriers to housing mobility.
- HB 6611, Fair Share Planning and Zoning, is both the right thing to do on social justice issues and the smart thing to do to boost our state's economy.

Diversified housing is good for everyone because it builds us all up as stronger community together. Many places in Connecticut - like Spring Glen - deliberately had practices red-lining the community to exclude Black families from settling here. While those practices have changed, we must now deliberately take steps to undue this hateful legacy.

Communities around the country are taking steps to address these historical inequities in housing. States including New Hampshire, California, and South Carolina are passing similar legislation. Connecticut should be on the leading edge with this important work as well.

While our group is intent on starting the process of housing reform, we can't accomplish goals of widespread environmental and economic solutions piecemeal. SB 1024, HB 1166, and SB 1026 are bills that, together, make our communities more inclusive, environmentally conscious, prosperous and beautiful. Please support these bills.

Laura Perkins Davidson
Member, Spring Forward
Hamden, CT