

March 14, 2021

Esteemed members of the Planning and Development Committee:

*As a resident of Connecticut I oppose SB 1024 and HB 6613 for critical environmental and infrastructure reasons. I am for increasing affordable housing but a "one size fits all" approach will not work and will hurt Connecticut.*

The views that some share that these bills provide an environmental improvement are false. Our state has a history of septic failures as well as mismanagement of private utilities (e.g. community wells), with expensive publicly-funded remediation necessitated, so this is concerning. DEEP and the Connecticut Department of Public Health should be consulted on any such proposal. I oppose raising by 50% the size limit for alternative septic/community wastewater systems that are exempt from oversight by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) (ll. 746-748, 681-682). Such systems have not been widely used. It is unclear why this limit is being raised – what is the problem it is addressing?

These bills distance the common sense of infrastructure first and could decimate the already fragile conservation tenets that have been broken by rampant development. Towns like mine are working vigorously to restore Long Island Sound, improve storm water run-off contamination, and implement nitrogen mitigation plans. This bill forces small towns to put in density at the expensive of small town infrastructure that is already stretched, fragile, and fighting for coastal resiliency in the face of climate change.

I am for increasing affordable housing but am against SB 1027 and HB 6613. I am against a one size fits all approach that doesn't incorporate local infrastructure characteristics, local choice on our environment, high building costs and the wise guidance our local planning and zoning board has provided that makes our town a desirable place to live. My town of Greenwich does try to include affordable housing and does have a fair amount. State definitions do not include the multitude of affordable housing my town offers to local teachers and work place housing that is provided privately. If definitions of affordable housing were changed, my town of Greenwich would exceed state guidelines. The western part of Connecticut created 48% of new affordable housing units in Connecticut, despite accounting for 16% of the state's population.

It is easy to craft a "one size fits all bill". As history has proven, it is hard to keep your stake holders from voting with their feet and leaving Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Dempsey

Greenwich, CT