

Dear Planning & Development Committee,

Please see below for my written testimony in favor of SB 1024.

I am an associate professor of political science at Boston University and the Assistant Director of Policy at the Center for Antiracist Research. I'm writing to strongly support SB 1024 based on my research on public participation in land use decision-making; my work shows that an as-of-right process is more equitable than our current process, which privileges the voices of advantaged, older, white homeowners. In my peer-reviewed book *Neighborhood Defenders: Participatory Politics and America's Housing Crisis* and multiple peer-reviewed articles, my co-authors and I show that planning and zoning board meetings triggered by the special permit/variance process amplify the voices of an unrepresentative group overwhelmingly opposed to the construction of new housing. Over a three-year time period, we identify *every individual who participated in a planning and zoning board meeting* across 97 cities and towns in Massachusetts, and link these individuals with administrative data. We find they are significantly older, whiter, and more likely to be homeowners. They are also almost uniformly opposed to the construction of new housing, with only 14 percent of commenters showing up to support new projects, including desperately needed affordable housing. Rather empowering underrepresented voices, the special permit/variance process allows privileged community members to wall off their communities, preventing new homes and new residents from accessing public goods and exacerbating existing racial/economic segregation.

Please let me know if you have any questions, and thank you for considering this legislation.

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