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March 13, 2021

To: The Honorable Members of the Connecticut State Legislature
Planning and Development Committee
Legislative Office Building – Room 2100
Hartford, CT 06106

Respectfully submitting my opposition to the raised bills with respect to Home Rule of Local Zoning: 6611; 6612; 6613, 1024; 1026; 1027; 6107

Thank you for allowing me to present my thoughts opposing bills that remove local planning & zoning authority from the citizens of Connecticut towns and the elected officials that represent the residents.

I am approaching my 25th anniversary of being a resident of Weston, CT, moving here to marry my wife of 25 years who is a Weston resident of 29 years, and is currently principal of Weston Intermediate School having begun her education career on School Road as a teacher 27 years ago. She also holds her 093 certification having attended the Neag School of Education at UConn.

Previously I have lived first in Bridgeport, then in Trumbull, and in Fairfield, prior to Weston first moving to Connecticut in 1986.

I am currently serving my community as a Planning & Zoning Commissioner having been elected in 2017. We developed and completed our 2020 POCD which was warmly received by the state, and clearly addressed our concern for housing that would provide Weston with affordable gateway dwellings yet maintain our quintessentially historic Connecticut small town experience - predominantly of 2-acre zoning protecting our aquifer. And this effort will be born by residents, not commercial enterprise.

Indeed, Weston has virtually no commercial base to help pay for our quality schools, our dedicated open space, our historic sites including the Lachat Town Farm, and unique style of living in only twenty square miles.

As it has been said, there is an attendant cost of living in this manner – with no commercial support, and the operation and maintenance of our town has fallen squarely on residents with little help from the state. Even so, with respect to education, and a Blue Ribbon high school, we have been a proactive Open Choice school district since its early beginnings.

While being born in the Bronx, and then growing up in the Tarrytowns of New York, prior to a thruway or Tappan Zee Bridge, I take special pride in now being a resident of Connecticut. This state represents the qualities and fierce independence that led to our country's *Declaration of Independence*, signed by four Connecticut residents: Roger Sherman, Samuel Huntington, William Williams, and Oliver Wolcott. A fifth signer, Lyman Hall, while signing as a representative of Georgia, was in fact a Connecticut son, raised in Wallingford, and educated at Yale.

These sons of Connecticut believed in independence, self-determination, and self-government. Today's system of local planning, zoning, and self-rule is an extension of why the United States of America came into existence. Weston, and most of the other small towns of the state have taken our responsibilities seriously and with devotion.

As I write this testimony, the Weston Planning & Zoning Commission is hard at work developing a strategy and exploring ways to build an affordable gateway of housing for those who cannot afford a two-acre sized

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home lot or even one of our smaller pre-existing non-conforming homes on smaller pieces of land. We are also hard at work crafting similar housing strategies for seniors of Weston to age in place in Weston in smaller residences without leaving the town they raised their families in. We expect to field a town survey within days to involve all our residents in the planning process. When we conducted our most recent town survey, with some 2700 responses (out of only 3,500 homes), it was clear in 2018 that pathways for others to join our community who currently would find it unaffordable to do so is of paramount importance to current residents.

Where we are now, there are fewer than 85 buildable lots – and many of those have restrictions caused by wetlands and other land issues. We also only exist with every home having its own septic system and virtually every home having its own well. Having said that, it is not stopping us from executing our responsibility.

One also has to keep in mind, we are not near, nor have access to mass transportation and the two state roads the run through our town, route 53, and 57 are barely wider than what they were when horse-drawn carriages were the primary method of travel, and few if any available space is even near these two main roads.

Simply put, it is egregious for a group of state legislatures to rip from our hands, self-determination and self-administration where there is not a single piece of evidence of Weston having ever had a discriminatory practice. To live here, one has to want to live in a sidewalk-less community of winding roads, take on the responsibility of maintaining both well and septic, and for the most part, travelling outside our town for work, basic shopping and health needs.

Since 1787, Weston has been managing itself through good times and bad. We are color, religious, and ethnicity blind. We have many smaller houses on smaller plots of land than the zoned-two acre, and we are striving to include even more diverse housing with little land to do it on, and no commercial enterprise to draw revenue from. Anything we have, we bear the weight on our own shoulders.

I believe the majority of small towns in Connecticut operate in the same manner with the same ethos.

With no disrespect intended, there has been no proof, no example, no historical data to suggest that a group of legislators and activists from large cities have ever risen to the occasion of fixing their own communities' myriad problems – with no proof of solution in sight. And I would suggest that before trying to take proven and successful management and fiduciary responsibility away from duly elected community officials of Weston and our sister small towns, that the state and the large cities heal themselves before they attempt to put in place regulations that will most certainly, in my opinion, damage the state of Connecticut and what makes us attractive... forever.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harold Falber". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.