

*To:* CT General Assembly Planning & Development Committee

*From:* Anibal Gomez-Contreras, Hartford CT

*Re:* SB 1024, An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications Of Certain Land Use Officials And Certain Sewage Disposal Systems

*Date:* March 15, 2021

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

My name is Anibal Gomez, and I am an undergraduate at Trinity College in Hartford. Connecticut has been my home for the past four years, but in a few months, I will need to find a job and a new place to live. Although I would love to remain in the Constitution State, our state lacks the housing stock that I need to make Connecticut my lifelong home, thanks in large part to restrictive zoning laws. I am not alone in this sentiment; many of my peers at Trinity and at other colleges in Connecticut share this concern. Connecticut is home to some of the most prestigious and highly-ranked schools in the nation, producing some of our nation's brightest minds. But because recent graduates cannot afford to lease single-family homes, many end up departing Connecticut to go work in other states. This predicament does not only apply to recent Connecticut graduates; businesses across Connecticut miss out on talented workers because housing is too expensive, lacking in variety, or inaccessible to public transportation. The strict zoning ordinances established in many areas of Connecticut are to blame for the unreasonably high cost of housing, making Connecticut living impossible for students like myself who wish to remain in our incredible state, and even more inaccessible to lower-income families.

SB 1024 addresses all of this. The proposals from SB 1024 like allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), building gentle density housing near transportation and main streets, will make Connecticut towns able to create more housing options, and facilitate access to housing nearer transit, all while protecting Connecticut's greenspaces. These changes will help reduce the cost of homes, allowing more people from different backgrounds to flourish in our communities and share in the beauty of our state.

For too long, people of color and low-income families have been excluded from towns in Connecticut because of restrictive zoning laws enacted with that particular goal in mind: exclusion. Laws are a reflection of their constituents and their constituents' beliefs. I do not think these exclusive and segregationist laws are an accurate reflection of Connecticut's people or what we as a state represent. SB 1024 will help align our zoning codes with the values we hold dear: dedication to justice and equality, defense of the natural environment, and a commitment to the success of all people in Connecticut.

Thank you very much for allowing me to share my thoughts.

With urgency,

Anibal Gomez-Contreras