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39 May Brook Road
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Connecticut General Assembly
Planning and Development Committee
Legislative Office Building
Room 2100
Hartford, CT 06106

March 14th, 2021

Dear Chairman Steve Cassano, Chairman Cristin McCarthy Vahey, Ranking Member Tony Hwang, Ranking Member Joseph Zullo, and members of the Planning and Development Committee:

I hope that my letter finds you and finds you doing well.

I am Dr. Jeffrey Gordon. I live in Woodstock, CT. I am the Chairman of Woodstock's Planning & Zoning Commission. I have been elected and re-elected by the people of my town to serve these past 13+ years as their representative on my town's Planning & Zoning Commission. I have served as the Commission Chair these past 12+ years.

I am opposed to efforts in SB 1024 and other bills to take away the local control of planning and zoning in each and every one of Connecticut's 169 municipalities. I oppose efforts to punish any municipality that does not meet additional and unnecessary state mandates imposed upon the towns. I ask that you do not support these efforts.

These efforts are antithetical to the long established and long respected tradition of people in their own communities having a direct say in their own communities. People in their communities, including in the communities you represent, elect their own municipal leaders. A municipal Planning and Zoning Commission is comprised of people who live in the town and who are elected directly by the people of the town. This type of Commission is designed to and functions to work with people throughout the town to discuss, craft, change, and update the town's subdivision and zoning regulations. By working in such an inclusive manner, each town decides for itself what works and what does not work for its planning and zoning needs.

Each town in Connecticut is unique. A top down approach to zoning would be to attempt to hammer a square peg into a round hole. It does not work. It would be very unfair to the people of each community in Connecticut to have rules imposed them that have not been thought through thoroughly, with their direct involvement, for how the rules would work or not work in their communities. Would it be fair to the people of Glastonbury to have rules from New Haven imposed upon them, and vice versa? Would it be fair to the people of Fairfield to have rules from Hartford imposed upon them, and vice versa? Would it be fair to the people of Old Saybrook to have rules from Bridgeport imposed upon them, and vice versa? Would it be fair to the people of Westbrook to have rules from Putnam imposed upon them, and vice versa? It would not be fair. Likewise, it would not be fair to the people of

Woodstock to have rules from other communities, some very different from the character and uniqueness of Woodstock, be imposed upon them.

There are already rules and laws focused on preventing breaches of diversity concerns. Each town and city knows this to be true and endeavors to do what can be done to have a fair process for everyone. The courts have upheld Planning and Zoning Commissions' lawful use of land use regulations when the process is fair, consistent, and whole. The same courts strike down illegal actions of Planning and Zoning Commissions. New mandates are not needed. The system works.

There are already laws regarding affordable housing and incentives for affordable housing. SB 1024 and other bills of a similar kind do not promote affordable housing of a meaningful and sustainable manner. SB 1024 and bills of a similar kind do not engender equity. The best way to continue to work for affordable housing and for a fair housing system is to do so locally in the communities across Connecticut. This is what towns across Connecticut have been doing and are doing.

Each community goes through a repeated process of looking at updating assessments of affordability for people. I have been involved in many such assessments in my town of Woodstock working with people all throughout Woodstock on such projects. There is a difference between affordability with a capital "A" as it relates to state definitions of affordability and affordability with a lower case "a" as it relates to what is actually affordable in a community. Because each of Connecticut's 169 municipalities is different from each other, each community's actual affordability needs and efforts to promote affordability are different from each other. The efforts in which I have been involved to look at the local issues affecting elder people, low to middle income families, or young adults be able to stay in their homes or to move to Woodstock, or for people to keep their working farms in their families or to have workers join their farms, are very different from the local efforts in Hartford, Groton, Stamford, or Torrington. Why? Because each one of these communities is different from each other. Trying to make a one size fits all approach work is doomed to fail and to have unintended consequences.

Speaking from my own first hand experience these many years on Woodstock's Planning and Zoning Commission and as its Chairman, a lot of time, effort, and understanding goes into having land use regulations that meet the needs as best as possible for everyone while maintaining the commitment to the entire community. This includes an inclusive process for those who live and work already in Woodstock and for those who are interested in moving to Woodstock. This includes a serious effort to help people afford living in Woodstock or moving to Woodstock. I am opposed to efforts that would take away all of this from the people of Woodstock and throughout Connecticut. Why would the legislature want to take away from people the serious, ongoing work being done by them to address many various issues and concerns in their communities?

It is very important that common sense local control of planning and zoning in each of the towns and cities of Connecticut be determined by the people of each town and city who live in each town and city. These are the very people best positioned to elect their own local officials who are accountable directly to them and who know best how to work with them. These are the very people who have local

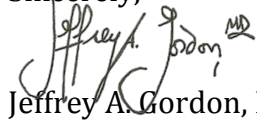
opportunities for their voices to be heard on matters of concern to their communities. Why take away from them their voice in what happens in their communities? Why have others who do not live in their towns and cities, or even know much about their communities, tell them what to do in their own communities?

What Connecticut needs to promote better public policy is to promote a flourishing, sustainable economy that benefits everyone. This would provide more opportunities to everyone and the ability of more people to be able to use these opportunities if they choose to do so.

I ask that you vote NO on SB 1024 and other bills to take away the local control of planning and zoning in each and every one of Connecticut's 169 municipalities.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey A. Gordon, M.D.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jeffrey A. Gordon, M.D.