

March 12, 2021

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF **SB 1024**

AN ACT CONCERNING ZONING AUTHORITY, CERTAIN DESIGN GUIDELINES, QUALIFICATIONS OF CERTAIN LAND USE OFFICIALS AND CERTAIN SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS.

Dear Chairman Cassano, Chairwoman McCarthy Vahey, Vice Chairman Needleman, Vice Chairwoman Goupil, Ranking Member Senator Hwang, Ranking Member Zullo, and Distinguished Members of the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Planning and Development Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. On behalf of Community Solutions, I am offering testimony in support of SB1024. As you may know, Community Solutions is a non-profit organization that works to achieve a lasting end to homelessness that leaves no one behind.

We offer our testimony in support of SB1024 because it provides much-needed updates to the nearly 100 year-old Zoning Enabling Act. As a non-profit developer focused on social impact, we know how zoning can affect the work of community organizations like ours. The Main Streets, Transit-Oriented Development, Model Codes, and Commissioner Training provisions of this bill are critical to improving equitable community development outcomes across the state.

Main Streets and Transit-Oriented Development

At Community Solutions we believe in expanding housing access and increasing opportunity for residents. And yet the pattern of single family development in Connecticut ensures that housing options for many residents are financially unattainable and physically inaccessible. The Main Streets and Transit-Oriented Development provisions of SB 1024 will significantly increase the amount of housing supply in areas near community services, amenities, and transit. Such access is crucial for residents transitioning out of homelessness- and can play a major role in supporting specific household needs. Without additional housing in walkable or transit-served areas, Connecticut will continue to experience a dire shortage of housing for those who need it most.

A Model Form-Based Code

This bill's proposal to develop a model form-based zoning code offers residents, businesses, and non profit developers like Community Solutions a chance to shape the "rules of design" and develop predictable expectations for the shape of their neighborhoods. A model zoning code would provide a tremendous opportunity for towns to draw on a valuable resource, while giving voice to the experience and perspective of community-based organizations. Such a collaborative process would markedly improve the form and outcomes of new development. The bill thus ensures that municipal authorities are empowered to provide community-developed standards up front.

Commissioner Training

In parallel, the training requirement for land use commissioners will help ensure that those making important decisions have the requisite knowledge to understand the consequences and implications of their decisions. When considering that housing affordability, economic opportunity, and social equity are the factors at stake in such decisions - this is a common-sense and critically important requirement.

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In sum, SB 1024 will empower communities, while taming unpredictable processes and timelines that drive up cost and undermine feasibility. These factors overwhelmingly affect developers ability to provide safe, affordable and quality housing to the residents who need it most.

Community Solutions is pioneering models that can help communities close the housing gaps that stand in the way of ending homelessness. We believe that equity and housing access are central to this work—and that policymakers must take action to promote affordability and accessibility. Facing a shortage of over 86,000 units that are affordable and available for extremely-low income renters¹, Connecticut must do more to address the challenge at hand. SB 1024 promises to increase access to communities throughout Connecticut by increasing housing supply, enabling greater housing diversity, and improving the processes for reviewing new development. Doing so will ensure that residents across the state have the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rosanne Haggerty
President
Community Solutions, Int.

MORE ABOUT COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS:

Since 2015, we have supported over 80 cities and communities across the nation through our Vision Zero Campaign, in a drive to end homelessness. Simultaneously, we deliver new financing models for affordable housing and community development projects: including the former M Swift and Sons Factory in Hartford. This project in North Hartford illustrates our collaborative approach to community-based real estate development: Community Solutions is partnering with the community to revitalize the building, spurring job growth, economic development and community health in North Hartford.

¹ <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/connecticut>