

My name is Faith Ham, and I live at 633 Cortland Circle, Cheshire. Thank you for allowing me to appear before you this morning. I ask that you vote no against SB1024 and its related bills.

I find it ironic that you have listened for nearly 24 hours to public comment about legislations that will curb if not eliminate all together public testimony on local zoning.

I am Connecticut native who grew up in one of its smallest towns in the state. I attended local schools, was always active in my church. My family has worked the land since before we were a nation. I am not an expert on zoning or housing. I am simply a resident. As such I reject in the most unequivocal terms the premise of this bill.

I've been following the debate that has led to these bills with utter dismay. Ladies and gentlemen of this panel, we are not a state that intentionally discriminates, segregates, or is in any way racist as some on this committee have implied or out claimed. I am appalled that outsiders can swoop in and attempt to impose upon us policies that have been tried and have failed in Manhattan or Texas or anywhere else and point an accusatory finger at us.

One of the most frustrating aspects of these bills is the ignorance on the part of the authors to take into account the reasons why many of these zoning regulations were put in place to begin with. As I said, I grew up in rural Connecticut. As a child, a septic tank was a luxury. Our water came from an well. I assure you, the two-acre minimum in my area was not to protect against "affordable housing" It was to accommodate that novel device known as a septic tank. To this day we joke about our "city mouse" cousins who have no clue about household waste disposal think God created sewer lines on the eighth day. Water? Do the bills' proponents understand that wells still provide water to most of the single-family houses the proponents of these measures find so anathema. Who, ladies, and gentlemen will pay for these infrastructure improvements in your eutopia?

And yet, this legislation, a gilded gift to out-of-state builders, calls for "as-of-right" housing. First, let's dispense with the notion that this will be affordable housing. Unless you intend next to impose price controls, which given current trends, may be in the offing. This will be market value housing. And right now, another committee has pegged that at \$430,000 for a dwelling. Hardly affordable.

Advocates of market rate multifamily development say that these laws will come at no cost to the state. Wrong. Affected towns that have to deal with exponential market value development will see unprecedented infrastructure demands and costs. Those infrastructure costs do not increase in a straight line, but can instead step up. Not only does mult-family dwelling strain the systems put in place to serve the dwelling, but it also burdens the systems – often antiquated -- of the public buildings, such as schools, that serve the residents. The very real infrastructure costs will be passed onto all residents – including those low-income residents who can least afford them -- through higher property taxes, making towns less affordable to both renters and homeowners in the community.

I assure you, these are very real obstacles to housing that have to be addressed before units are developed, not after. They are not shibboleths designed to keep people out. No one knows better how to address them than local zoning authorities.

None of us opposed to these bills wants to live on a feudal estate, cordoned off from the outside world. We want vibrant towns that attract – not force – people to them. If you want truly affordable housing, review and cut unnecessary building code regulations that inflate construction costs. On a macro level the best way to achieve that growth and vitality is to restore Connecticut as an industrial mecca that fostered ingenuity, creativity, and, dare I say it, wealth. Central housing planning from Hartford cannot do the job. Do not take local control away from our towns. Vote no against SB1024 and its attendant bills.