

SB 1024

Dear members of the Planning and Development Committee,

I am calling to express my support for Senate Bill 1024, an act concerning zoning authority, certain design guidelines, qualifications of certain land use officials and certain sewage disposal systems.

The United States' original sin is white supremacy, here in Connecticut it's discriminatory planning and zoning rules and redlining. It was during the Great Depression that the Federal Housing Administration was established to encourage home ownership and entrepreneurship among middle class Americans. This administration wielded enormous influence on neighborhoods because they had the power to approve and deny people loans and mortgages that could make a neighborhood more desirable to live and work in. Local banks rated neighborhoods and towns with large non-white populations as "less desirable" and routinely denied people who lived in or near those neighborhoods loans and mortgages. They went so far as to outline those neighborhoods in red, hence the term redlining. Towns were given the power to create zoning laws that explicitly banned people of color from buying certain homes. An alligator-filled moat couldn't have been more effective in cutting off those neighborhoods. This kind of discrimination was outlawed at the federal level with the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, but the damage had already been done to a generation of our state's population and the federal government was redigent to enforce these anti-discrimination laws at the local level.

We still live with the effects of redlining in our state to this day where we have among the wealthiest towns in the nation next to some of the poorest cities in our nation. We can no longer afford to ignore this elephant in the room and pretend it's just a piece of the furniture. Last summer we had an uprising across the country and across Connecticut of people demanding we finally have some truth and reconciliation with our original sin. This bill is a very important step in that direction of desegregating our state, re-enfranchising those that we have disenfranchised for too long, and attracting a younger and more diverse population to live in our state.

Public transportation, especially Metro North, is probably the biggest uniter of people in our state. In part because no one wants to get stuck in traffic on I-95 or the Merritt Parkway and it's also extremely popular with the younger generation who prefer living in a neighborhood that is walkable and convenient. Not to mention more environmentally conscious.

We have nothing to lose by making sure everyone no matter their zip code has the same fair shake at being a homeowner, business owner, or ensuring their children get a good education. Our state can do better and must do better going forward.

Thank you for your time,

Leanne Harpin

Fairfield CT