

*To:* CT General Assembly Planning & Development Committee

*From:* Robert Hazlett / Greenwich

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

*Date:* 3/15/21

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

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 1024, which I am in support of. I was born in and grew up in Greenwich, and therefore have great interest in the development of the state. It's my understanding that many will approach support for this bill from the perspective of racial inequity, injustice, and segregation, which are incredibly important aspects of this bill. To capture the full benefits of the bill, I will illustrate my support for the bill from an economic argument.

I, in some sense, agree with critics of this bill, that decisions on the fates of property should be left to a local level. I believe the decision should be left to the most local of all scales. To the point, I believe the one most justified to make decisions about a property is the property owner themselves, and any intrusion on property rights by a local, county, or state bureaucracy should be reserved to the highest of concerns. In this bill's guarantee of by-right provisions, it gives property owners the freedom to do more with their property, something I hope anyone who says they support economic growth, free market dynamics, property rights, and individual freedoms, should agree is important. I would also hope similarly minded people might agree that more often than not, individuals motivated by market conditions are best able to maximize the value of their property, often delivering the most value for all when they are freed from intervention from bureaucracies armed with thousands of pages of regulation and years of process, and might note that the state's vibrant towns, often many centuries old, were laid out and built before the advent of zoning codes.

To be clear, this bill obviously stops well short of enabling a completely free market to develop anything anywhere in Connecticut. Instead, this bill smartly chooses to open more freedom to the state's land in the most useful places. This state has been blessed to have infrastructure gifted to us from generations past, in the form of our extensive rail network, and in its many town centers built from the ground up to be walkable rather than car-centric, and we ought to take advantage of these assets to legalize forms of housing for those who wish not to or cannot afford to drive every time they leave their home. I am also happy this bill includes provisions to establish architectural standards and model zoning codes, so that neighborhoods can preserve aesthetics without hampering housing capacity, and so that homebuilders can know ahead of time what is allowed instead of spending capital and resources just to spend years in hearings and litigation, deterring investment in the state. I'm also confident that legalizing more housing units to allow the market to address demand for it, in addition to the robust affordable housing provisions included, can profitably increase the tax base, and enable more people to live with lower

housing costs to help working families save, as studies show that legalizing the housing supply to increase where demand increases helps keep housing costs for families from spiraling out of control, as economic principles might intuitively indicate.

I personally know of people who have moved to multifamily housing over the years, and I have little doubt that without these accommodations, many who need these homes would not have been able to live in their town, or the state entirely. To make housing of this kind illegal is not just detrimental to our economy, but to all who need lowered housing costs, at whatever stage in life. It's no secret that states across this country who are able to build more housing and add more people are among some of the fastest growing economies, but in Connecticut, property right restrictions often significantly hamper our ability to grow, as evidenced by Connecticut's disheartening 5 year streak in declining in population. The ability of any level of government can make in-demand products illegal should be held to the highest of scrutiny, and I believe in many cases the reasoning for keeping certain housing options illegal have put Connecticut at a disadvantage to the numerous regions across this country which have realized its value.

Taking all this into account, I see this bill as a significant step forward towards advancing Connecticut's economic freedom and dynamism, and will help build a more livable Connecticut for residents of all walks of life and of future generations, and I hope the legislature and governor enact it into law.

Thank you

Robert Hazlett