

TO: Planning & Development Committee:

I cannot overstate my vehement opposition to Senate Bill 1024 and I am writing to you to ensure you will vote against it and all similar bills and, instead, protect the interests of Connecticut's property owners (and voters!).

Zoning MUST remain under local Town home rule and control. This is not a political issue – it is about taxpayers' (and voters!) property rights.

This bill is a top-down, heavy-handed, one-size-fits-all approach to zoning which will NOT work particularly given the disparate sizes and needs of each of the 169 towns in Connecticut. It will simply destroy the unique charm and character of individual towns. It will undoubtedly have a destabilizing effect on housing values (and for the past 20 years Connecticut's housing market hasn't been great to begin with).

The bill seems to ignore (or is unaware) that zoning doesn't exist in a vacuum. It is intrinsically linked to environmental issues – private well and public water supplies, air pollution, habitat, and open space requirements - and the negative impact of housing density on all of these. Zoning is linked to jobs, transportation, infrastructure, and school system capacity. It impacts safety – police, fire and emergency medical service requirements. Therefore local control and local public hearings are of paramount importance to the well-being, health and safety of town residents but would instead be eliminated under this short-sighted bill.

This bill is NOT the way to address affordable housing requirements – if that is what its intent is. The bill adds multifamily units but doesn't even speak to affordable housing unless there are greater than 10 units so I am baffled as to what is even the point of this bill. Even worse, urban areas and problems are virtually completely ignored under this bill. Instead, the bill (as well as House Bill 6611 and Senate Bill 804) try to urbanize the suburbs. It doesn't solve anything and will produce myriad unintended consequences to the detriment of many towns and property owners.

Westport has shown itself as more than capable of home rule and control. Looking at Westport's fiscal situation and bond rating, versus the State of Connecticut, I'll stick with the Town of Westport, thanks very much. Westport has made great efforts to meet 8-30g affordable housing goals and, as you know, was awarded a moratorium by the State. I think we have proven our intention and ability to act equitably. The State of Connecticut does NOT know better than the local Planning & Zoning what is best for the welfare of a town and its residents.

Additionally, any incremental approach to passage of this bill (i.e. a small part of the bill this year, another small part next year....) must also be prohibited and guarded against. This is a paramount issue to property owners. This bill is simply BAD public policy which will have a systemic negative impact on communities and could irreparably damage them and their residents for years to come.

Thank you,  
Sincerely,  
Laurie Hedges

