

My name is Aaron Hull. I speak to you today as a father, community member, and professional educator in support of SB 1024, **AN ACT CONCERNING ZONING AUTHORITY, CERTAIN DESIGN GUIDELINES, QUALIFICATIONS OF CERTAIN LAND USE OFFICIALS AND CERTAIN SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS**. I believe that positive social policy changes in Connecticut zoning laws may help to eliminate *de facto* segregation in my classrooms.

- In 18 years teaching in Fairfield County, I've had two African American students in my Advanced Placement classes.
- Zoning is demonstrably linked to inter-and intra-school *de facto* segregation by decades of peer-reviewed data.

I teach high school in Fairfield County, where my students in Advanced Placement classes also benefit from Dual Enrollment opportunities through my role as an adjunct professor with the University of Connecticut's Early College Experience program. I have taught for 23 years, 18 here in Connecticut. I have taught two African American students during that time, and very few Latino/Latina students, and even fewer with modest means. My students report that they take Advanced Placement classes with no more than one or two unique African American students at a time (for example, they may have multiple classes with the same student). Dr. Beverly Tatum, among others, has documented the cultural barriers African American students face in accessing Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Early College Experience/Concurrent Enrollment, and similar classes (Tatum 2017: 145-149). Studies such as this often engage in Conceptual Misdirection, where the victims of the racially oppressive system are blamed rather than systemic racism itself (Cazenave 2016: 25).

This type of intra-school segregation is often colloquially referred to as tracking, but is more appropriately described as "inequitable access to advanced coursework opportunities" (Patrick, Socol, and Morgan 2020; Quinton 2014). In a personal and collaborative effort to break down some of these cultural barriers to these classes, several colleagues and I are taking a graduate class in Systemic Racism at the University of Connecticut this semester. One common theme in much of the literature is that of zoning and fair housing practices. Following the Fair Housing Act's passage in 1968, zoning has become a persistent and consistent means of covert discrimination. It's the connection between these two concepts, zoning, and school tracking, that I'm exploring in my own fulfillment of the requirements for the class. Zoning and tracking are not unique to Fairfield County public schools; they are prevalent around the state of Connecticut and across the nation. They result in particularly acute test-score gaps in our region, for example: "Northeastern metro areas have particularly large gaps. Indeed, six of the 10 metro areas with the highest test score gaps are in the Northeast, including Bridgeport, Hartford, New

Haven, Buffalo, Rochester, and Philadelphia” (Rothwell 2012). Zoning, historically, has been a covert tool of discrimination in the form of redlining (Rothstein 2017) and is a function of government-ordained policy (Wilson 1996; Rothstein 2017; Feagin and Ducey 2018).

The connection between the two fits in the typology first articulated by Joe Feagin in a seminal work first published in April of 1977 in *American Politics Quarterly*, entitled “Indirect Institutionalized Discrimination: A Typological and Policy Analysis.” Tracking is a result of what Feagin described as *side-effect* discrimination, and a change in zoning rules around the state of Connecticut might mitigate some of the segregation in classrooms I’ve experienced. Feagin identifies *isolate discrimination*, *sporadic group discrimination*, *direct institutionalized discrimination*, and *indirect institutionalized discrimination* (Feagin 1977: 184). The last two categories are of interest to the committee today. “*Direct institutionalized discrimination* refers to socially prescribed actions which by intention have a differential and adverse impact on members of subordinate groups” (Feagin 1977: 185) and “*indirect institutionalized discrimination* refers to practices which have a negative and differential impact even though the policies or regulations guiding those actions were established, and are carried out, with no intent to harm” (Feagin 1977: 186). While some members of our zoning boards around the state may hold personal agendas, privately, that may be comfortable with segregation, it’s my belief that a vast majority of such board members fall into Feagin’s fourth category where they pursue their policies with no intent to harm. However, the impacts of their decisions segregate towns and classrooms.

Both forms, *direct* and *indirect institutional discrimination*, play a role in our discussion, as Feagin expands his explanation to include three other concepts, “fair in form” practices, “side-effect” discrimination,” and “past-in-present discrimination” (Feagin 1977: 186). For example, before 1968, related housing discrimination practices like redlining and discriminatory bank lending practices (Feagin and Ducey 2019, pp. 171-180; Wilson 1996, pp. 163-165) were common. Feagin notes that, “Examples of this type are so common as to defy complete enumeration, but they include the legally required practices resulting in the segregation of black and other nonwhites in inferior facilities in such areas as public schools and public accommodations” (185). As norms evolve these examples of racism become more covert, to more “fair in form”, or neutral, practices (Feagin 1977: 186).

The “neighborhood school” is established, and residents begin talking about the “character of a neighborhood.” This is “past-in-present” racism in action, as when the segregated community of today was established by the zoning decisions of the past (Feagin 1977: 187). Additionally, segregated or tracked classrooms today are the result of segregated

elementary districts. This is also an example of “side-effect racism,” as in which the zoning boards today engage in “practices in institutional (or organizational) area which have an adverse impact because they are indirectly linked to discriminatory practices in yet another institutional (or organizational) area (Feagin 1977: 186-187). In fact, both direct and indirect institutional discrimination can be at play simultaneously (see Figure 1).

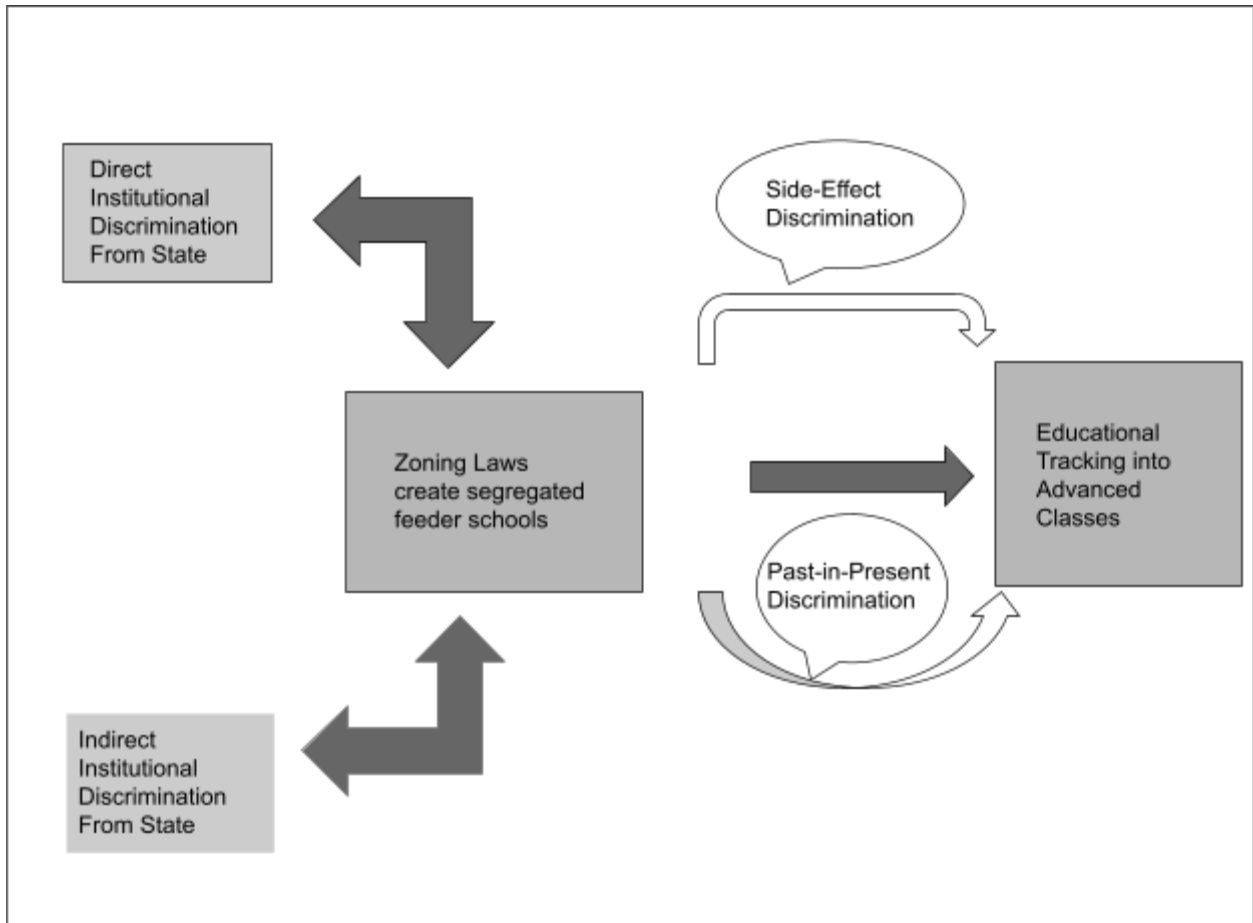


Figure 1: Direct and Indirect Institutional Discrimination play roles in Zoning laws, which in turn create educational tracks in public schools through side-effect and past-in-present discrimination practices.

This process can be changed. With forward-thinking public policy such as that present in SB 1024, we can not only desegregate our communities but our classrooms as well. This will strengthen both our towns and cities and our schools. Thank you.

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