

Dear members of the Planning and Development Committee,

I write in strong support for SB1024. I have been a member of the Tolland Planning and Zoning Commission for the past eight years, and now serve as vice-chair of that body. I am writing today not in my official capacity, but as a resident of small Connecticut town that could greatly benefit from this proposed legislation. Because of past settlement patterns and to some extent our current zoning regulations, our town has very little affordable or workforce housing. Instead, it is dominated by single family homes on large lots. As a commission, we are aware of this and have been working hard to increase our housing diversity, but given the hole we are in now, it will be many years before we achieve our goals. Therefore the provisions of SB1024, including decreased zoning barriers for accessory dwelling units, and promoting increased multi-family development near transit hubs and existing commercial areas, will help us and other towns like us to increase our housing diversity.

I also strongly support the training requirements in SB1024 for members of land use boards. I can say from personal experience that many members of such boards, who are elected by local residents, have little training or background in planning or land use issues. None of the members of our current commission, for example, has a background in these areas. As volunteers we do our best to bring ourselves up to speed, but additional training will be incredibly helpful in ensuring that these boards and commissions make wise, informed decisions for our towns.

Finally, I would like to commend this bill for recognizing that it will be challenging for some towns to achieve increased housing diversity overnight. As I said, Tolland is committed to this goal, but given our current situation it will take time to achieve it. We cannot compel developers to build more housing of our choosing, so we are dependent on local economic conditions as we move toward our goals. I greatly appreciate that the proposed legislation does not penalize towns that have not yet achieved diversity despite their best intentions, but instead focuses on creating conditions that will allow more diverse development at the appropriate places when it becomes economically feasible. I should add that it would likely help gain buy-in from towns like our if the state were also to offer incentives (financial or regulatory) that would help localities build necessary infrastructure, such as sewers, water and gas lines, and sidewalks, needed to increase the stock of affordable and workforce housing in towns like Tolland.

Thank you very much for your attention, and I urge you to support SB1024.

Sincerely,

Bruce J. Mayer  
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