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Public Hearing Testimony before the Connecticut General Assembly's Housing Committee
March 15th, 2021 In Support of:

*S.B. 1024 AN ACT CONCERNING ZONING AUTHORITY, CERTAIN DESIGN GUIDELINES,
QUALIFICATIONS OF CERTAIN LAND USE OFFICIALS AND CERTAIN SEWAGE
DISPOSAL SYSTEMS.*

via email to pdtestimony@cga.ct.gov

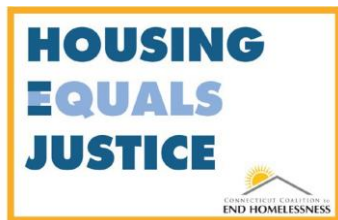
Dear Chairman Cassano, Chairwoman McCarthy Vahey, Vice Chairman Needleman, Vice Chairwoman Goupil, Ranking Member Senator Hwang, Ranking Member Zullo, and Distinguished Members of the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Planning and Development Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Omena McCoy and I am the Senior Policy Analyst at the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH). I speak before you today as an employee of an organization that represents more than 100 member agencies across our state who are working to end homelessness.

At CCEH we fundamentally believe, and research demonstrates that the cost of homelessness is expensive. It costs our public systems more to leave our homeless population without adequate housing options than it does to help them secure housing and provide them with the resources needed to keep their housing. We fundamentally believe that we must always strive to create different iterations of impact for a population of people that sees themselves living differently, living housed.

While the streets, bus stops, alley ways and shelters in our towns and cities are the places where our homeless neighbors lay their heads down at night, these are not the places where the state's homeless population sees themselves long term. Ultimately, they envision themselves gainfully employed and in a place that they can call home. The issue is that when this moment finally does come for these individuals and their families, they will find a severe lack of affordable and high-quality dwelling units across our state.

The high cost of housing, along with a shortage of affordable housing and housing diversity is owed in large part to restrictive land use laws that perpetuate racial segregation, housing injustice and economic inequity. CCEH supports S.B. 1024, as this legislation seeks to increase the state's housing supply, diversify our housing stock, thus creating more equity in communities occupied by marginalized members.

Furthermore, the Transit-Oriented Development, Commissioner Training, Model Codes and Main Streets provisions of legislation are vital to strengthening equitable community development outcomes across the state. For the purpose of today's testimony, I would like to focus in on two components of the legislation that directly impacts the lived realities of our



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homeless population and would enhance these realities as these individuals begin their lives on firm footing: 1) Main Streets/Transit-Oriented Development 2) Accessory Dwelling Units.

Main Streets/Transit-Oriented Development

As members of our homeless population begin to envision their lives differently and obtain stable housing, it will be critical for them to occupy housing that is close to or within a ten-mile radius of the place they call home. The practicality of S.B. 1024 ensures that everything these persons need access to in terms of basic necessity and resources for leisure (i.e. local shops, cafes) are nearby. In addition, the increased foot traffic from work to home will help build a greater sense of community among residents, while also creating a greater sense of responsibility to promote the safety and well-being one another and the community at large. Lastly, increasing housing development near public transit and local job centers decreases one's daily commute to work and reduces harmful environmental impact.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Being built where housing already exists, ADUs are ideal naturally affordable housing. As an individual's needs change over time, these units can be adapted for different household types, employment situations, income levels and stages of life. As these units do not require a large amount of space (generally 600-1,000 sq.ft), ADUs help to generate revenue for homeowners who are looking for assistance covering mortgage payments and other housing related expenses. These small and inexpensive units offer an affordable housing option for our neighbors who will ultimately transition or are currently looking to transition from shelter housing to housing that they can call their own. The opportunity for homeowners to help increase the state's housing stock for low-income residents and also generate additional revenue for their household, benefits all parties involved (i.e. state, homeowner, tenant).

CCEH continues to work diligently in addressing the needs of our homeless population, but our organization and others that offer housing and homelessness services cannot do this work alone. When an individual has a place that they can call their own, that is the day that life anew begins. The State of Connecticut must take action to promote housing accessibility and affordability. Those who envision their lives differently rely on you all to make the decisions necessary to ensure that shelters, bus stops and alley ways are places where not one more person is forced to sleep.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Omena McCoy
CT Coalition to End Homelessness