

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

My name is Sarah McKinnis. I am a resident of Fairfield and am testifying to convey my strong support for Senate Bill 1024, *An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications Of Certain Land Use Officials And Certain Sewage Disposal Systems*.

Historic redlining and exclusionary zoning policies have amplified racial and economic inequities in Connecticut for generations. I've seen this in my own town. Growing up in Fairfield, and looking at the zoning laws now, I can see that zoning policies have prevented 2+ family units from being built in the majority of my town, and how this limits the affordability of housing. Indeed, a randomized 2021 poll of 300 CT residents showed that 65% feel housing is too expensive.¹ It's crucial that the state legislature takes action to make our state a better place to live and implement zoning reform to create a more equitable, stronger Connecticut where families can thrive.

Currently, single-family zoning dominates Connecticut, allowed on 90.5% of zoned land while 3+ family housing is allowed on only 2.5% of zoned land, mostly concentrated in urban areas with large non-white populations. Legal obstacles such as large minimum lot sizes, minimum parking requirements, restrictions on accessory dwelling units, and historic character standards block multifamily and affordable housing in many localities. These regulations not only limit housing supply, but they also fail to encourage development near transit centers and main streets, hurting the local economy and contributing to expansion into natural areas.

Currently, our zoning laws stem from racially discriminatory policies, which has disadvantaged families of color. This needs to change. 100% of the areas redlined in Connecticut in 1937 were classified as “lower opportunity” areas in 2009.² Our state is one of the most segregated in the country—two in three of Connecticut’s non-white residents live in 15 of the 169 towns in the state.³ Furthermore, Black and Hispanic/Latino students are overrepresented in the percentage of children in poverty in the state.⁴

Based on extensive research, SB 1024 will create more housing to reduce the cost of housing overall and build a more diverse housing stock to respond to modern needs and desires. It will

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<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee8c6c9681b6f2799a4883a/t/60484002ee24ad52bccad22e/1615347734324/SB+1024.pdf>

² http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/docs/CTMaps/connecticut_opportunity_mapping_report.pdf

³ https://www.ctfairhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/CFHC_Zoning_Guide.pdf

⁴ <https://www.nhregister.com/news/article/Data-shows-a-divided-Connecticut-on-race-and-13561784.php>

also empower towns to approve more housing, unhindered by outdated state sewerage and traffic standards, in order to further reduce housing costs.

SB 1024 is a crucial step toward desegregation and promoting housing equity in our state. Expanding and diversifying housing supply to meet the needs of all Connecticut residents is critical to remedying racial inequalities, encouraging economic growth, and protecting farmland and natural areas. Thank you for your consideration, and I hope you choose to support SB 1024.

Sarah McKinnis
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