

Connecticut General Assembly Joint Planning and Development Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2100
Hartford, CT 06106

March 12, 2021

Re: **SB 1024**, AN ACT CONCERNING ZONING AUTHORITY, CERTAIN DESIGN GUIDELINES,
QUALIFICATIONS OF CERTAIN LAND USE OFFICIALS AND CERTAIN SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS

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:

I am writing to share my strong support for **SB1024**, legislation that will enact needed zoning
reform across Connecticut to bring us closer to creating a state that is more equitable, less car-
dependent, and environmentally sustainable to for future generations to come.

I moved to Connecticut about 7 years ago and at that time was floored by how car dependent I
became for every aspect of life from commuting to work, to getting groceries, to visiting
friends, or going to the beach. Prior to living in Connecticut, I had never owned a car and always
lived in places with access to affordable and convenient public transportation. Many of my
Connecticut neighbors raved about how easy it was to commute on Metro North to NYC, but I
was astonished that people still had to drive to the train station in the first place.

Car-dependent communities like most places in Connecticut perpetuate racial disparities and
economic injustice. Owning a car is expensive so it is no surprise that lower income adults
experience greater transportation insecurity. In New Haven, 46% of adults who earn less than
\$15,000 per year report not having access to a car when needed. Black and Latinx residents of
New Haven are also more likely to lack car access. We need to invest in local transportation
options to ensure all residents can get to jobs, appointments, and services. **SB1024** takes
important steps to ensure that our zoning codes encourage transit-oriented development so
that people can live close to the trains and buses that take them to their jobs, appointments,
and leisure activities.

SB1024 also addresses the excessive parking lots that are everywhere you look when driving
through Connecticut. Parking lots pave over valuable green spaces in our cities, towns, and
rural areas. I was running errands on Whalley Ave in New Haven on a busy Saturday afternoon
and even the parking lot at Stop n' Shop was only half full. This is because parking minimum
regulations force developers to build a certain number of parking spots to be built. These types
of minimum parking mandates incentivize and subsidize private car ownership. In New Haven,
30% of residents (including me!) do not own cars. Yet our zoning laws require property owners
to build parking. They pass on the costs of expensive parking spots to renters or homeowners

which has contributed to the affordable housing crisis in our city. I know that SB1024 could help push New Haven towards reducing parking minimums more quickly and improve the status of excessive parking in towns and cities across the state.

As esoteric as it may seem, zoning reform lies at the heart of building a racially and economically just Connecticut. I know that there will be loud and vocal opposition to SB1024 from small, wealthy, majority white towns. These towns and their residents claim that their zoning codes are “race neutral” and that towns simply want to decide what’s best for their residents. These claims ignore decades of purposeful redlining that has sought to keep low-income, black, brown, and other non-white residents out of certain towns by the types of zoning, housing availability, and transportation options. If we are to truly reimagine an equitable Connecticut, we will need to ask all towns, cities, and regions to re-evaluate their land use laws in a unified way.

I urge you to support **SB1024** to propel our state into the best standards of zoning practice.

Sincerely,

Lorena Mitchell
93 Pearl St.
New Haven, CT