

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 Isiuwa Omoigui, and I am a resident of New Haven 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. 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.

Zoning laws dictate how we design and build our communities. With smart zoning reform, we can boost our economy, make our communities more equitable, and protect our environment. We can help the Connecticut we love flourish and live up to its full potential. We know zoning reform is one of many policies – including funding formulas, post-COVID eviction relief, & homeownership assistance – State legislators must enact for our families to thrive. But zoning reform is essential to a more equitable, stronger, cleaner Connecticut. Based on extensive research, we know zoning reform will: create more housing to reduce the cost of housing overall, build a more diverse housing stock to respond to modern needs and desires, and protect the Connecticut we love to save farmland and forest from destruction.

100% of the areas redlined in Connecticut in 1937 were classified as “lower opportunity” areas in 2009. CT's wealthiest zip code is in Weston, a town that is 95.75% white. The state's poorest zip code, in Waterbury, is about 70% Black and Hispanic. Two in three of Connecticut's non-white residents live in 15 of the 169 towns in the state. Even though the majority (57.5%) of Connecticut children are white, in 2016, the poverty rate for white children was 5.5 percent, 28.3 percent for Black children, and 31.3 percent for Hispanic or Latino children. Black and Hispanic/Latino students are overrepresented in this metric.

SB 1024 is a crucial step toward desegregation and promoting housing equity in our state. This bill will empower towns to direct development to places with existing infrastructure & housing, instead of sprawl, generate significant tax revenues & support Main Street small businesses, adapt & adopt a ready-made, no-cost model code, approve more housing, unhindered by outdated State sewerage & traffic standards, and save millions on litigation. 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.

Isiuwa Omoigui

New Haven, CT