

S.B. 1024 -- Zoning reorganization, middle housing, and ADUs
Testimony of Raphael L. Podolsky

Planning & Development Committee public hearing – March 15, 2021

Recommended Committee action: **APPROVAL OF THE BILL**
with possible amendments

S.B. 1024 is a comprehensive revision of the Zoning Enabling Act and an expansion of it to address issues of various kinds of “middle” housing (housing larger than single-family but smaller than large apartment buildings), multifamily housing generally, mixed-used housing, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), sewage disposal systems (which can be critical for opening up suburban areas to housing other than single-family housing), and education and training for zoning commissioners. The bill would be a major step toward overhauling and modernizing the zoning process. We support the bill generally (perhaps with some language changes). We note that H.B. 6613 appears to be a weaker version of Sections 5 and 6 of S.B. 1024 and that S.B. 1026 appears to be a weaker version of Section 9.

The underlying goal of S.B. 1024 appears to be to open a much wider range of housing opportunities, especially outside of center cities. We urge the Committee to evaluate these proposals with an eye to their actual likely impact on affordability and diversity and to their impact on households least likely to otherwise have adequate access to housing choice. For example, while ADUs can generate small dwelling units, often within housing that already exists, their ability to create suburban opportunities for low-income urban households is limited, especially since many ADUs are not advertised and very few are designed to house families with children. For that reason, we find the provisions in S.B. 1024 concerning middle housing to be especially important, since they will be of more significance in the types of housing available in the housing stock of suburban towns. Providing regional housing choice to urban residents requires that appropriate suburban housing exist, be available, and be offered widely. We hope that these factors will be considered as the Committee decides how to address these bills. We are available to be part of any such conversation that may occur.

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