

*To:* CT General Assembly Planning & Development Committee

*From:* Andrea Prusi, West Suffield, CT

*Re:* SB 1024, An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications Of Certain Land Use Officials And Certain Sewage Disposal Systems

*Date:* March 14, 2021

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

I write today to ask you to please pass SB 1024. A reckoning has been happening across our country regarding civil rights, systemic racism, and social justice. This bill will go a long way towards helping right wrongs of the past in the state of Connecticut. We have the opportunity to lead by example and show the rest of the country what is possible when equitable changes are made to long-standing systems.

I lived in Waterbury for thirteen years, and then I moved to Suffield in December 2019. I am a white cis woman. My two concerns moving from a large city to a small farm town were:

1. Will racism be rampant in the town?
2. Will there be any diversity at all in town?

Sadly I discovered there is indeed a lot of racism here, and there is shockingly little diversity. I can't help but realize the difference in zoning between the two locations. Suffield has very little multi-family housing. The median cost of a house here is also far greater than houses in Waterbury. Ironically, Waterbury's mill rate is more than double that of Suffield's. Lower income people are paying far more in taxes to live in locations that tend to have poorly performing school systems and a lack of nature. The difference in landscape is quite stark- Waterbury is full of concrete buildings right on top of each other, houses mere feet apart, and no green space or trees in many neighborhoods versus Suffield which has larger lawns, trees aplenty, and open green spaces.

Studies have shown that children who grow up in urban cities tend to have more health problems, such as childhood asthma. I worked in the Waterbury school system and I can attest to the effects of climate issues on children in a city versus children in a suburban or rural area. We are putting people's health and future at risk because of where they live, which isn't fair.

I know redlining happened in Suffield. It happened everywhere. These awful policies and practices from the past need to be abolished. It's time for zoning reform across the state. All of our residents deserve better. I would love to see more diversity in my town. We all benefit from surrounding ourselves with people from all backgrounds. It helps us all grow and learn, and our lives are so much more enriched.

We are not the cause of past atrocities and faulty policies, but we CAN be the ones to take a stand and make a positive change. Please vote yes on SB 1024.

Thank you for your time.

Andrea Prusi

West Suffield, CT