

Testimony to the Connecticut General Assembly's Planning & Development Committee

In support of Senate Bill 1024

03/15/2021

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

My name is Eli Roche. I am a Fairfield resident, Wesleyan University student, and Co-Chair of Wesleyan Democrats. I am writing to urge members of the committee and the General Assembly to support [SB-1024](#). This bill would be a serious step forward in the fights against racial injustice, climate change, and housing insecurity; it would also increase CT's tax base as we recover from this recession.

Just like the rest of the United States, the history of Connecticut's land usage is deeply rooted in systemic racism and intentional exclusion of people of color. Redlining,¹ "urban renewal"², and racial covenants³ all actively denied families of color the opportunity to generate trillions of dollars of wealth. Although the Fair Housing Act remedied some of these injustices, their modern descendants – including, but not limited to, exclusionary and low-density zoning, onerous permitting requirements, and excessive power for local zoning boards to block new construction – live on today.⁴ SB-1024 will begin to address this legacy by addressing exclusionary zoning head on, and though it is not comprehensive, it is a significant advancement. For Connecticut lawmakers to ignore the state's history of housing exclusion and not support remedial legislation would be an affront to the values of the Black Lives Matter, a movement that many self-professedly ascribe their support for.

In addition, SB-1024 will help relieve pressure on our green spaces by promoting dense and efficient construction as well as encouraging walkable, green neighborhoods. There is no reason to encroach on our local ecosystems when there is so much potential empty space lying vacant above our heads, nor to plan around cars instead of people. New multifamily housing and ADUs will be more efficient, both to heat and to commute from.

To be clear, SB-1024 will not singly solve problems like racial segregation, housing insecurity, or environmental degradation; and though it is a serious step in the right direction, subsequent legislation must build on its provisions, by increasing funding for mass transit and bicycle infrastructure, instituting parking maximums, increasing fuel taxes as well as taxing Vehicle Miles Travelled⁵, and tightening environmental standards on appliances and heating in new construction, among others. However, in the short term, this bill is a fantastic opportunity to make Connecticut a more prosperous and inclusive state.

For these reasons, I ask and encourage all members of the Connecticut General Assembly to vote in favor of SB-1024; I hope to see it used as a starting point and not as an end in and of itself.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Eli Roche

¹ <https://www.wnpr.org/post/what-redlining-did-connecticuts-impooverished-neighborhoods>

² https://www.innovations.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/hpd_1102_hoffman.pdf

³ <https://connecticuthistory.org/race-restrictive-covenants-in-property-deeds/>

⁴ <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

⁵ <https://static.tti.tamu.edu/tti.tamu.edu/documents/PRC-2016-2.pdf>