

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**



REPRESENTATIVE JASON ROJAS
HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER

Joint Committee of Planning and Development
Public Hearing Testimony
In support of HBs 6107, 6611, 6613 and SBs 1024 and 1026

Chairs McCarthy-Vahey and Cassano, Ranking Members Zullo and Hwang, and distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I have long been a proponent of modernizing our housing and zoning policies to address the cost of housing overall and the racial and economic isolation that is the result of both intentional and indifferent policy making at the local, state and federal levels.

I will first comment on the caustic, myopic, gaslighting rhetoric that is used by proponents of the status quo. Exaggerations of loss of local control or suggestions that proposed changes are an “assault on towns” or “extremely dangerous” or that they will result in a “very dangerous path” are irresponsible and a disservice to the public and the policy-making process. The individuals using this type of language are simply stoking fear for political purposes. Our country has a long and detrimental history of use of such rhetoric.

Yes, we are recommending changes to long standing polices, practices and decision-making processes. I respect local control and home rule but that does not mean that we should maintain a status quo that results in some of the highest housing costs in the country as well as some of the most morally bankrupt levels of racial and economic isolation in our country.

Housing policy is also the nexus for so many other policy outcomes whether it is public health, economic and social mobility, educational equity: housing policy and school policy, criminal justice, crime itself as well as the economic health of our state and our ability to address the workforce needs of our economy.

Housing policy is central to the larger debate we are having about equity and racial justice in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the disproportionate impact that COVID has had on lower income communities and communities of color. We are all too well aware of why policy makers are opposed: concerns about environment, density, traffic, impact on property values. All important and fair considerations.

I implore all colleagues opposed to these proposals to consider the other side of this debate:

1. What are your ideas to address the cost of housing and the availability of affordable housing?
2. Do you believe in enforcing Fair Housing laws?
3. Do you believe that we should work towards reducing racial and economic segregation?

I believe it is critically important that the legislature make changes to our housing and zoning policies to right the historical wrongs of our racist past and that lawmakers recognize how doing nothing impacts the economic, moral, and social health of Connecticut. All impacts we should care about regardless of political affiliation.