

To: CT General Assembly Planning & Development Committee

From: Vincent Saputo, Niantic, CT

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

Date: 3/15/2021

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

I am writing to you in favor of SB1024. As a lifelong resident of the state of Connecticut, I have grown up immersed in the consequences of outdated, racist zoning policy. My upbringing in Westbrook was car dependent and nearly entirely white. I grew up with a single mother in a single-family home that we could not afford. I rode my bicycle miles to school and work on roads so dangerous that looking back, it is a miracle I was never struck by a car. The main reason for these negative side-effects of my suburban upbringing? Excessive reliance on single family zoning, which 67.4% of Primarily Residential Zoning land in Connecticut is reserved for. This is unacceptable: the need for more diverse types of housing in Connecticut is stronger than ever.

During the pursuit of my geography degree, I completed a comprehensive analysis of a complete streets policy in Keene, NH. My colleagues and I found that the policy had been successful in implementing popular street safety measures like bike lanes and sidewalks. Those features proved to be tremendously efficient at getting people out of vehicles and walking or onto bicycles and public transit. Extensive research on the benefits of Complete Streets policies, and more broadly, dense development, form-based codes, and updated zoning policies indicated that the resulting increase in foot traffic generates tremendous increases in sales at local retailers, shops, and restaurants.

You do not need a geography degree to look at a map of predominant racial population distribution in our state to identify clear inequities. The current distribution of non-white populations in Connecticut, like elsewhere in the US, is a result of racist lending practices post World War II, known as redlining. It is not enough to condemn the actions of those predatory lending practices. We need *action* to right the wrongs of the past and to desegregate the state of Connecticut. SB1024 is a step in the correct direction. Increasing the amount of housing stock in the state will make housing affordable *everywhere*, giving residents true choice of where they can live.

In case you are unaware, we are facing the existential threat of climate change unless we reduce our carbon dioxide emissions to net-zero by 2050. The transportation sector in the United States is responsible for roughly 30% of emissions nationally while buildings consume about another 40%. By encouraging more dense housing types near main street districts and transit, citizens of our state will have to drive substantially less to get to work, the grocery store, or a night out. Furthermore, multifamily housing proves to be far more energy and water efficient than single family homes. I would know, as I am a multifamily housing Energy Analyst.

We need more diverse types of housing in Connecticut. The one size fits all model of single-family housing only zoning has driven sprawl, negatively impacted local economics, and perpetuated modern day racial segregation. It is time to move Connecticut toward the right direction and pass SB1024.

Sincerely,
Vincent Saputo