

To: CT General Assembly Planning & Development Committee

From: Alessandro Schooley, Hartford

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

Date: March 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:

For too long zoning has been used as a cudgel against racial equity and affordable housing. The result has been de facto segregation. The courts are unable or unwilling to solve these issues because of long standing precedent that requires some sort of invidious intent to invalidate a law. This allows communities to employ a pretext of traffic concerns, school crowding, infrastructure capacity, and other factors to hide their desire to keep certain kinds of people out of their community. As a result, the legislature must step in to rectify the glaring segregation in our state.

SB 1024 is a small step towards creating a better Connecticut that is inclusive of all its citizens. Our zoning regime is outdated, and SB 1024 is a much-needed remodel. For example, the car-culture rules of the mid-20th century that create inefficiency in housing should be left in the past and the new approach of SB 1024 that lessens the parking requirements of residential buildings should be adopted. This is but one aspect of a bill that aims to bring a smart and efficient approach to a zoning process that is typically marred by local politics, untethered from actual analysis of what would be best for the wider community. Each community is not an island, and restrictive zoning in a single community harms the rest of the state. Continuing to zone against smart and affordable housing policies is to act to our detriment.

SB 1024 will provide for a more inclusive Connecticut that will be enriched by its increased diversity. Creating greater access to housing will foster greater diversity of race, wealth, income, and other factors in our towns that will benefit all, as a rising tide will lift all boats.

We cannot continue to allow our state to become representative of the growing issue of inequality in American Life. We should be a leader in an effort to create an equitable environment for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'AS', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alessandro Schooley