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## TESTIMONY ON Bill No. 1024

### ***An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications of Certain Land Use Officials, And Certain Sewage Disposal Systems***

via email to [pdtestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:pdtestimony@cga.ct.gov)

By: Kent Schwendy, President and CEO, Corporation for Independent Living  
3/12/2021

Dear Chairman Cassano, Chairwoman McCarthy Vahey, Vice Chairman Needleman, Vice Chairwoman Goupil, Ranking Member Senator Hwang, Ranking Member Zullo, and Distinguished Members of the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Planning and Development Committee:

Thank you for letting me testify in favor of **SB 1024** today.

I am very proud to represent the Corporation for Independent Living (CIL), an organization that is dedicated to creating and sustaining housing for those in need, with a focus on people with disabilities, especially those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Since 1979, CIL has helped thousands of families and invested over half a billion dollars into communities throughout Connecticut and Massachusetts.

We support **SB 1024** because the disability community is suffering from a unique affordable housing crisis that long predates this pandemic: insufficient access to small-scale living arrangements like apartments and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Connecticut's zoning landscape is dominated by single-family districts, which drives up housing costs by limiting the types of housing that can be built. An estimated [50,000](#) CT residents are members of the I/DD community, and many depend on monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments.

There is [not](#) a single housing market in the state in which a person can afford to live on SSI alone and rent a safe, decent apartment without further rental assistance. Disabled Connecticut residents only receive [\\$921 per month](#) in SSI benefits, while rent for an average one-bedroom apartment ranges from [\\$810](#) in Windham County to over [\\$1,700](#) in the Stamford-Norwalk market. By keeping restrictive land use laws as they are, we are utterly failing Connecticut's I/DD community. Passing **SB 1024** will go a long way toward ameliorating this housing crisis.

In passing **SB 1024**, we have the opportunity to increase housing affordability and diversity for members of the I/DD community through zoning reform. The Connecticut state legislature must act to ensure that disabled residents of the state can access a diverse and affordable array of housing.

More multifamily units need to be built in Connecticut's cities and towns so that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can live in and contribute to vibrant communities. A higher [density](#) of multifamily units fosters affordability, making them more accessible to the I/DD community. **SB 1024** concentrates multifamily development in accessible regions like public transit corridors and downtowns, which will create a more inclusive housing stock with different types of housing options.

Currently, the process for approving multifamily housing is often burdensome, which blocks development and drives up costs for new types of housing. If we eliminate the requirement for lengthy and unneeded public hearings on multifamily housing developments, our state's disabled community can expeditiously receive high-quality housing that is naturally affordable. **SB 1024** recognizes this, and it is one of the many reasons that we urge swift passage of this bill. Already, developments like [Favarh](#) in Canton are providing inclusive and accessible living spaces for the I/DD community. **SB 1024** will help create even more.

Also, critically important is standardizing Connecticut zoning laws concerning ADUs. ADUs are small, independent living units that are secondary to a single-family home. ADUs allow disabled adults the option to live with their parents or guardians while maintaining the dignity of independent living. While most Connecticut municipalities allow ADUs, the application process is [often](#) costly and intensive. Additionally, detached ADUs are frequently [prohibited](#) in towns and cities, banning parents and guardians of people with disabilities from converting their detached garages into independent apartments. These laws are arbitrary, and Connecticut's I/DD community will benefit from **SB 1024**'s provisions concerning ADUs.

There is no special interest group called "Big I/DD" in Hartford or D.C, so it falls on groups like ours to make visible the needs of the intellectually and developmentally disabled community. It bears repeating that this community is facing an extreme housing crisis, and we firmly believe that the tens of thousands of Connecticut residents who are intellectually and developmentally disabled will benefit from **SB 1024**. These people are your constituents, and it is your job to represent them and their interests. Creating different types of housing will enable members of the I/DD community to live sustainably and independently within Connecticut's small towns and big cities. Please support **SB 1024** to ensure that all of your constituents can live in more inclusive communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
**Kent Schwendy, President and CEO**  
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