

Testimony of Alan Shaw on Raised S.B. No. 1024 AN ACT CONCERNING ZONING AUTHORITY, CERTAIN DESIGN GUIDELINES, QUALIFICATIONS OF CERTAIN LAND USE OFFICIALS AND CERTAIN SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS,

Raised S.B. No. 1026 AN ACT CONCERNING TRAINING FOR CERTAIN PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICIALS,

Raised S.B. No. 1027 AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS AND ZONING REGULATIONS,

Raised H.B. No. 6107 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REORGANIZATION OF THE ZONING ENABLING ACT AND THE PROMOTION OF MUNICIPAL COMPLIANCE,

Raised H.B. No. 6611 AN ACT CONCERNING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND OTHER POLICIES REGARDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT,

Raised H.B. No. 6612 AN ACT CONCERNING PROTECTIONS FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES AND THE ZONING ENABLING ACT,

Raised H.B. No. 6613 AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESSORY APARTMENTS, MIDDLE HOUSING AND MULTIFAMILY HOUSING.

My name is Alan Shaw and I am a lifelong resident of Connecticut. This is the first time I have ever submitted testimony on a group of bills at the same time. This seems unusual to me that so many proposals would have been submitted on such similar topics but are not consolidated into a single bill. Maybe that is what the committee hearing will accomplish, or maybe it is by design to make this process as confusing to the average citizen as possible. It is hard to separate the bills as they are so intertwined. I am not certain, but that nagging thought remains with me as I read these bills.

Connecticut has a long and proud history, home to both big cities and small towns. There are people who choose to live in both for a variety of reasons. These bills collectively will alter the ability of our state's citizens to make such choices, as the lines between cities and towns will be forever blurred. Far worse however is the loss of representation a voter will feel because much of the decision making power will be taken from local officials and given to state officials, who may never have set foot in the municipality in question.

Historically Connecticut decided to discontinue a system of counties in the 1960's. It seems like we are now going backwards in the development of regions, which are in most ways a county, these bills just don't call them that. It seems to allow for one more level of insulation between the average resident and the government that they are served by. This is certainly not in keeping with the Connecticut catch phrase of "Still Revolutionary", nor the image of our state's character it sought to inspire.

These proposals contain the definitions or redefinitions of such terms as Accessory Apartment, which looks awfully similar to what we used to call Illegal Apartments. They used to be the scourge of quiet residential neighborhoods, now they will be encouraged by the state. While there is mention of them meeting the building codes, by keeping them under the two-family limit, they will sit squarely outside of many fire safety codes. How about Main Street Corridor, while writers used to talk about the beauty of Main Street U.S.A., we will now be talking about how many buildings can we cram into such a formerly beautiful slice of americana. Then there is Transit Station which will include busses, ferries and most other forms of transportation. It was not that long ago that Stamford had quite the battle between the city and the state over who could decide on building high-rise towers at our train station. Now 168 other towns & cities get to have their own versions of this fight.

There are some noble environmental goals in some of these bills, but also some questionable developmental goals. Municipalities would not be able to prohibit a trailer park. A rare form of housing in our state and the butt of many jokes, but surely a development that should be up to the municipality. In-home child care would now be the recipient of special consideration and protections that are not afforded other businesses. Some of the provisions could be taken to allow people to live in storefronts or operate businesses out of their dining rooms, regardless of the impact to their communities. These proposals also require local officials to seek periodic approval from unelected state bureaucrats. This is setting a dangerous precedent.

A curious proposal on training requirements for members of local zoning boards seems like the goal is not about training in general but training is specific agenda items. However, since these boards and commissions are made up of citizens, usually appointed in some bipartisan manner, how can this be seen as anything other than an attempt to limit the participation of the average citizen in their own local government?

People choose here they live on a variety of factors. I live in the city I was born and raised in, but I chose not to move because of being close to work. There is a certain convenience, yet I know with people who chose differently based on wanting more space or being in a different school district. At a time when more people are leaving Connecticut than are moving here, why we would want to fundamentally change the character of our state is beyond me, perhaps this is a backhanded way to punish people who move out, by reducing the price they will get for their homes. Taken as a whole, this is not about making our state better, it is about compliance and control.

Respectfully Submitted,
Alan Shaw
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