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**Regarding SB 1024  
An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications Of  
Certain Land Use Officials And Certain Sewage Disposal Systems  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly**

Submitted: March 14, 2021  
via email to [pdtestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:pdtestimony@cga.ct.gov)

By: Cathy Smith,  
Board Member, Norwalk River Watershed Association

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:

On behalf of the Norwalk River Watershed Association (NRWA), I am providing testimony in reference to SB1024. The NRWA is an entirely volunteer-run not-for-profit organization whose mission is to improve water quality and protect the fish and wildlife habitats of the Norwalk River watershed. We seek to accomplish this through both education and action. Our efforts include work on restoring the riverbanks, meadows, and forests of the watershed while promoting awareness of native species and the prudent recreational use of the river and the surrounding open space and trails.

As an organization focused on environmental issues, we do not have deep expertise in some of the issues relevant to this bill. However, in addition to supporting initiatives directed at improving the health of our environment, we believe strongly in the need to build more diverse communities and we support equitable and inclusive growth in line with sound environmental stewardship.

We believe that SB 1024 addresses some of the issues of concern to us and offers solutions that help accomplish the following:

- Limit outward sprawl and the resulting destruction of our forests, farmland, and wildlife habitats by accommodating statewide housing demand through modestly increasing density where it already exists – near our main streets and transit stations.

- Curb the expansion of impervious surfaces, the prevalence of which is a major threat to the Norwalk River and its watershed. Impervious surfaces (parking lots, driveways, paved roads, etc.) prevent water from infiltrating the ground and are the main contributor to stormwater runoff. Green spaces such as forests and meadows allow stormwater to percolate into the ground and the aquifers beneath, protecting water quality and preventing soil erosion.
- Promote the use of public transportation and other means of eco-friendly transportation like walking or biking over the use of automobiles.
- Limit greenhouse gas emissions.
- Reduce the risks of environmental hazards such as flooding, soil erosion, and forest fires by limiting outward sprawl.

In particular, we would like to note our support for this bill's provision to reduce excessive parking mandates. Not only do excessive parking requirements help create vast expanses of impermeable surface and the resulting runoff of polluted stormwater into the Norwalk River and its tributaries, but they curtail the amount of green space and lead to habitat fragmentation. Habitat fragmentation is a major threat to biodiversity and notably to native pollinator species. For example, most of our native bees have small body sizes and are unable to extend foraging ranges, making habitat fragmentation one of the largest threats to their survival. And the survival of pollinators and other insects is critical to our own survival.

The proposed bill addresses many issues of concern to us by capping excessive parking mandates, reducing automobile dependence that is linked with "traffic congestion, environmental degradation, and negative health and safety impacts."

If we want to conserve what we love most about Connecticut, we must find ways to preserve our environment and make our state more sustainable. The proposals in SB1024 will allow our state to build healthier, cleaner, more vibrant communities. For the reasons stated above, the Norwalk River Watershed Association supports the passage of this bill. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,



Norwalk River Watershed Association  
Board Member