

14 March 2021

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

My name is Jay Stange and I am a resident taxpayer in West Hartford. My wife and I live in a single family home and we own and rent a two-family house which is also located in West Hartford. I am testifying to convey my strong support for Senate Bill 1024, An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications Of Certain Land Use Officials And Certain Sewage Disposal Systems.

We recently moved to West Hartford with our two school-age children. We are excited to be close to my wife's family, who live in the City of Hartford and in the Boston area. We were attracted to West Hartford for its proximity to downtown Hartford, where my wife works, but also for its excellent schools and closely situated services. We are able to walk to school and bicycle to buy groceries and access professional services like doctor's appointments. There are several parks within a five minute bicycle ride of our home.

Unfortunately, we've found the streets to be not as safe as we'd like. Roadways in Connecticut do not belong to people, they belong to speeding automobiles - to the detriment of us all. I believe people drive too fast because they have no choice. Suburban residents of Connecticut, primarily in automobiles with just one occupant, travel long distances to work, school and family errands. Too many people choose to live in single family homes with large yards far from population centers and work opportunities. This reliance on automobiles makes roadways unsafe for non-motorized users and contributes heavily to climate change. More than 38% of air pollution in the state is caused by our transportation sector, dominated by single occupancy automobile travel.

In order for our streets to be safer and for us to make a dent in the generational emergency of climate change we must live closer to where we work and access services. Increasing housing density close to transit opportunities and main street town centers will create more sustainable, more attractive communities in Connecticut. If we are to attract young families to our towns and cities, we must create economically and socially diverse town centers. This bill addresses my concerns by encouraging increased density near transit and main streets which will encourage and support walkability. Transportation and zoning problems can not be solved in isolation.

SB 1024 also addresses historic redlining and exclusionary zoning policies which have amplified racial and economic inequities in Connecticut for generations. Single-family zoning dominates Connecticut, allowed on 90.5% of zoned land while multi-family (3 or more units) housing is allowed on only 2.5% of zoned land. Multi-family housing is mostly concentrated in urban areas with large non-white populations. Legal obstacles such as large minimum lot sizes, minimum parking requirements, restrictions on accessory dwelling units, and historic character standards block multifamily and affordable housing in many localities. These regulations not only limit

housing supply, but they also fail to encourage development near transit centers and main streets, hurting the local economy and contributing to expansion into natural areas.

Zoning reform is essential to counteract the negative effects of redlining on neighborhoods — and the families who inhabit them. Legalizing accessory dwelling units can help low-income families by providing more affordable housing options.

By creating more housing, SB 1024 will reduce the cost of housing overall in the state of Connecticut. According to Desegregate CT, increasing the number of multifamily units by 1,500 will result in 3,198 jobs and \$39.8 million in state revenue the first year after the unit increase. These are enormous potential benefits for both residents and state governments.

New affordable housing opportunities will allow more diverse schools and more interesting and economically viable businesses. One of Connecticut's weaknesses is economic and cultural segregation. This bill helps move us toward a more diverse, sustainable, productive and economically viable state.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

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