



## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE CT PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

CHRISTIE STEWART, DIRECTOR

FAIRFIELD COUNTY'S CENTER FOR HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

MARCH 15, 2021

### **Support**

- SB 1024:** An act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications of Certain Land Use Officials and Certain Sewage Disposal Systems
- SB 1026:** An Act Concerning Training for Certain Planning and Zoning Officials
- HB 6107:** An Act Concerning the Reorganization of the Zoning Enabling Act and the Promotion of Municipal Compliance
- HB 6613:** An Act Concerning Accessory Apartments, Middle Housing and Multifamily Housing

Senator Cassano, Representative McCarthy Vahey, Senator Hwang, Representative Zullo, and members of the committee:

My name is Christie Stewart. I am a resident of Weston CT, and the director of Fairfield County's Center for Housing Opportunity which is founded on the premise that a safe and affordable home is the foundation from which all Fairfield County residents can thrive.

Last month my organization released a new report commissioned by the CT Department of Housing. Our analysis provides the state's first comprehensive inventory of affordable housing and identifies a critical shortage of 86,000 homes affordable to CT households earning between 0 and 30% of area median income. To put that shortage in context, US Census data show that over the last two decades, CT has produced only 49,000 units of housing in total, 51% of which were single family homes, and less than a quarter of which were affordable to the state's lowest-income residents. Housing supply and housing demand are completely unaligned in CT, and the legislature must ensure that local land use decision makers have the necessary tools to equitably address the housing needs of CT's increasingly diverse population.

**We strongly support the Desegregate CT platform for land use reform in the State of Connecticut as outlined in SB 1024. We also support SB 1026, HB 6107 and HB 6613.**

Since the state ceded land use control to local planning and zoning commissions, in aggregate, those bodies simply have not adequately served, let alone met, the housing needs of CT's low-income households. An 86,000-unit housing shortage for low-income residents illustrates the reality that CT's current land use regulation system is not meeting housing need across the state equitably.

Decades of local land use decisions and irrefutable data and research show that the status quo is not delivering adequate access to housing opportunity in any region in our state. CT needs both state *and* local action on land use reform if it is to meet its duty to serve *all residents*. We cannot afford to limit ourselves to one or the other. This false dichotomy, put forward predominantly by single family homeowners, is exacerbating the significant housing challenges facing more than one-third of CT residents who have little to no representation at local, land use decision making tables. We are looking to this committee to begin to remediate this and to lead the state to a more equitable future where all CT households have access to housing opportunity.



Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christie Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light blue rectangular background.

Christie Stewart  
*Director, FCCHO*

Cc: Fairfield County's Community Foundation  
Partnership for Strong Communities  
Regional Plan Association  
Supportive Housing Works