

To: CT General Assembly Planning and Development Committee

From: The Rev. Rachel W Thomas, Deep River

Re: SE 1024, An Act Concerning zoning authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications of Certain Land Use Officials, and Certain Sewage Disposal Systems.

Date: March 15, 2021

Chairman Cassan, Chairwoman McCarthy Vahey, Vice Chairman Needleman, Vice Chairwoman Goupil, Ranking Member Senator Hwang, Ranking Member Zullo, and Members of the Committee.

I write in support of State Bill 1024 to create a fairer, stronger Connecticut. In the last year, largely through the work of [desegregatect.org](http://desegregatect.org), I have learned much of the way that our Zoning laws determine the character of our communities. At present, much of Connecticut is zoned to prevent a diversity of incomes, transportation options, and racial backgrounds.

As someone who lives in Deep River and works with Episcopal congregations throughout Southeastern Connecticut, I continually hear stories of how those who work in our communities cannot afford to live here. I have witnessed the best and the worst of the affordable housing discussion as all too often a vocal minority keeps good development from happening.

SB 1024 would:

- Legalize Accessory Dwelling Units -- small units nestled in single-family housing
- Eliminate public hearing burdens
- Encourage Main St. Housing and Transit Oriented Development;
- Provide guidelines for towns to choose to adapt to improve & clarify decision-making, defining "character" with physical standards
- Cap Costly parking mandates for housing.
- Provide training for commissioners, to focus especially on fair housing and environmental issues.

It strikes me that a diversity of housing makes it more possible to have a diversity of voices in our communities. Such diversity is a gift in helping us all navigate this complex, global environment in which we live. Many I know in local congregations are craving that diversity, especially as they seek to address racial injustice. Many others know, from working with those recently incarcerated or homeless, that having a stable housing option is key to gaining a stable life.

I hope you will work on this to move it forward quickly, for the good of all.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Rachel W. Thomas

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