

To: CT General Assembly Planning & Development Committee

From: Lior Trestman, New Haven, CT

Re: SB 1024, An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications Of Certain Land Use Officials And Certain Sewage Disposal Systems

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

As someone who grew up in rural Norfolk Connecticut and is now living in New Haven Connecticut, it is excruciatingly clear why zoning reforms are critically needed.

Growing up in Norfolk, I can remember one Black family in town, who faced open bigotry and left not long after moving in. I can remember a scant handful of people of color who lived in town, and from working at the public library I knew most of the town's 1600 residents. This is because zoning prohibits multi-family dwellings, ADUs, and other forms of more affordable housing options. The only new housing that was pursued in all of the years that I lived there was a large development made up of single family homes. A huge swath of forest was cut down in preparation, only for the development to fall through before construction began. Essentially, to live in Norfolk you need to have a lot of money or have land that's been in the family for generations. If you want to make more housing than what currently exists, the natural beauty that makes Connecticut special must suffer.

When I went off to college at the University of Connecticut, I was exposed to infinitely more diversity than I ever saw in Norfolk, and this made me want to do nothing more than to leave Connecticut, so I could continue to live in this newfound richness of diversity.

Luckily, I moved to New Haven instead, and found the culture-rich home I was looking for. Unfortunately, while New Haven is culture rich, many of its inhabitants are financially poor and every month stare down imminent eviction if they miss a paycheck. The housing market in New Haven is better than Norfolk, but is still unnecessarily expensive because housing supply is unnecessarily restricted. Parking minimums, restrictions of multi-family units and ADUs, and other zoning restrictions mean that our towns don't collect the taxes they could, encourage sprawl into as yet undestroyed natural landscapes, and make even the most basic housing a privilege for the well-paid.

As a personal anecdote, I currently live with 3 housemates to make our rent affordable, and each of us pays about \$650 a month. One of my roommates lost his job due to COVID, and has been struggling and sometimes failing to pay rent. When I tried to help him find more affordable housing in the City, I found that there is practically nothing available under \$600 a month. Forget utilities, washer/dryer, smoke free, or any particular neighborhood, I challenge you to find a bedroom with a door in New Haven to legally sleep for less than \$600 a month. If you can find

any, they probably require 2 months of rent in advance. He might end up homeless not because he doesn't make any money, but because he doesn't make enough to afford what's available. The next time you see a homeless person and think to yourself that they should get a job, consider that they may well have one, yet even so housing is just too expensive to afford.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I hope you will vote to pass SB 1024.
Lior Trestman