

To: CT General Assembly Planning & Development Committee

From: Donna Trowers-Morrison, Windsor, CT

Re: SB 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 Cassano, Chairwoman McCarthy Vahey, Vice Chairman Needleman, Vice Chairwoman Goupil, Ranking Member Senator Hwang, Ranking Member Zullo, and Members of the Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony on S.B. No.1024 to support efforts to increase housing opportunity in Connecticut.

My name is Donna Trowers-Morrison and I am honored to testify today in support of SB 1024. I am a Real Estate Broker and a Housing Advocate but my connection to housing issues go back well beyond that. My father was a builder and through his work I learned early on the importance of housing--the security that a decent and affordable home can provide. I have had my real estate license for over 15 years and in this capacity, I have always considered myself more of an educator than a salesperson. My heart and my work focus on finding the right home that will allow an individual or family to thrive. And beyond that, to advocate for the increase of housing options to address what I see as the inadequacy of Connecticut's existing housing stock.

I believe outdated zoning codes and land use policies have stifled growth and severely limited housing options in Connecticut. Times have changed, housing demands are different today and people require different options. The problem is urgent for Connecticut's seniors and young families in particular. We can no longer afford to hold onto underused, large lots as the population grows and changes. We need to acknowledge and address the crippling issues our mature residents face. We have empty nesters who would rather occupy a smaller unit without stairs. We have growing families with the desire to live in high performing neighborhoods and enjoy the amenities.

Meeting the needs of a changing population will not be easy but I believe that SB 1024 is an effective first step. In particular, I believe the provision to allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) as-of-right is an important step toward increasing affordable housing options. ADUs represent a diverse and naturally affordable form of housing perfect for seniors who prefer to remain in their community, small families seeking to live in high opportunity neighborhoods, and recent graduates returning home.

ADUs also have substantial economic benefits for municipalities, homeowners, and renters. First and foremost, ADUs increase the stock of affordable housing enabling a renter to access high opportunity communities. ADUs also boost property values for homeowners and offer a potential line of income as folks try to make ends meet. And of course, ADUs represent a boost in tax revenue for the municipality.

Ultimately, my decision to support SB 1024 is about people. I have seen first-hand the effect of isolation on mature residents as they were forced to move away from the place they call home due to a lack of affordable housing options. I have seen low- and middle-income residents struggle, locked out of opportunity. I work in housing because I understand its importance. We can do better and need to be better. We need to pass SB 1024 because home is where the heart is, and everyone deserves the opportunity to thrive.

Sincerely,

Donna Trowers-Morrison
Housing Advocate, Broker