



Testimony on SB 1024: An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications of Certain Land use Officials and Certain Sewage Disposal Systems

By: Vincent J. Tufo, CEO, Charter Oak Communities

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via email to pdtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Dear Chairman Cassano, Chairwoman McCarthy Vahey, Vice Chairman Needleman, Vice Chairwoman Goupil, Ranking Member Senator Hwang, Ranking Member Zullo, and Distinguished Members of the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Planning and Development Committee:

On behalf of Charter Oak Communities, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of SB 1024. As you may know, our organization is the housing authority for the city of Stamford. It is our mission to provide high-quality, affordable rental opportunities, designed to meet and exceed the needs of our city's residents while enriching surrounding neighborhoods. Over the years, we have provided nearly [7,000](#) Stamford residents with a home, connected [835](#) families with community partners and resources, and currently manage [23](#) properties.

Our organization has seen firsthand how Connecticut's severe lack of affordable and high-quality living units harms our state. This is a bipartisan issue requiring statewide solutions. We believe that SB 1024 is one such solution, acting with appropriate urgency while providing the flexibility to implement locally appropriate solutions.

Connecticut has some of the highest housing prices in the nation. According to the [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#), the Stamford-Norwalk region is the fifth most-expensive metropolitan area in the country for renting a two-bedroom apartment. There is also a noticeable shortage of affordable units. In [2018](#), 140,531 families in Connecticut were labeled "extremely low-income," but only around 50,000 affordable units were available to them. There is less than one affordable unit for every three extremely low-income households. Additionally, 51% of renters in the Stamford Norwalk area are cost burdened, spending over 30% of household income on housing costs. Due, in part, to this well-documented housing shortage, Connecticut's population has been [declining](#) for years.

The relatively high housing prices and shortage of affordable housing largely results from barriers that block the development of new housing, which SB 1024 addresses. Through putting out a [model form-based code](#), which will significantly simplify development, and putting [reasonable caps](#) on parking mandates, our organization believes that developers will be able to create more affordable housing in Connecticut.

Currently, [37%](#) of all Connecticut households spend more than 30% of their income on housing. [One in six](#) pay more than [half of their income](#) on housing. Some of these issues can be solved by progressive housing authorities like Charter Oak Communities, but not all of it. Housing authorities cannot unilaterally help the hundreds of thousands of our residents and neighboring residents who are suffering because of restrictive zoning laws.



Affordable housing can be beautiful and appropriate, as evidenced by some of the work that our organization has done. Lawnhill Terrace, on Stamford's East Side, is a small cluster of garden-style apartments that seamlessly mesh with the surrounding neighborhood. The Westwood Townhomes, on the West Side, show the impact of mixed-income developments and how much life they can breathe into cities.

To keep Connecticut vibrant, desirable and affordable as a place for all individuals, regardless of income, we must take action on zoning this legislative session. We emphatically assert that Connecticut needs more diverse types of housing and more affordable housing. SB 1024 will empower all communities to develop the housing our state requires.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Vincent J. Tufo
Chief Executive Officer
Housing Authority of the City of Stamford
d/b/a Charter Oak Communities