

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

I am writing to state my support for the zoning reforms included in SB 1024, An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications Of Certain Land Use Officials And Certain Sewage Disposal Systems. Unnecessarily restrictive zoning keeps Connecticut from realizing its potential in many ways: it serves as a structure for racial segregation, it artificially constrains housing supply and economic growth, and it promotes car-centered sprawl that damages our watersheds and contributes to climate change.

I would like to focus my testimony on housing affordability and accessory dwelling units. Every family should be guaranteed quality, affordable housing. But the reality in Connecticut is that there is a shortage of housing and many families are severely rent-burdened. Building new housing and nestling new housing into existing structures can help to alleviate this shortage and the suffering that comes with it. My wife and I recently moved into a third floor apartment in a space under the rafters an existing structure without materially altering even the exterior of the building. We're happy up here. While this space is a new unit of housing, it's very similar to what is required in the proposed language for accessory dwelling units.

In fact, some of the most beautiful living arrangements in New Haven's 21st ward are similar units, garden-level granny flats, and nonconforming accessory buildings like carriage houses. Allowing for more of this type of housing as of right will increase housing affordability for renters, sustain homeowners and allowing older residents to age in place, and contribute to economic development led by locals. These accessory dwelling units are unobtrusive by nature and should not require a public hearing.

Because our state is fractured into so many municipalities, a piecemeal approach to housing affordability will not be meaningful. The provisions of SB 1024 in this bill do not represent a wholesale overhaul of every city and town's zoning code. Rather the bill is full of common-sense reforms – like accessory dwelling units – that can open up more affordable housing options across the state.

Thank you for your consideration,

Steven Winter

Alder, Ward 21

New Haven