



## Treasurer Shawn T. Wooden

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MARCH 15, 2021

Senator Cassano, Representative McCarthy Vahey, and members of the Planning and Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **Senate Bill 1024**, An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications of Certain Land Use Officials and Certain Sewage Disposal Systems.

I want to thank the advocates, stakeholders, and proponents for tackling such an important issue as affordable housing in Connecticut. Segregation impacts people's access to quality education, health outcomes, and involvement in the criminal justice system. We also know that Connecticut is one of the most segregated states in the country. This bill seeks to integrate Connecticut by increasing affordable housing in the state. It does this through increasing the housing stock overall and requiring affordable units for transit-oriented developments, among other things.

When I grew up in the North End of Hartford, access to quality public education was hard to find for many in my neighborhood. Because of this, my parents enrolled me in a desegregation busing program in the third grade, that sent me to school in Manchester. Every day, I and the other students in the program would take the bus two hours each way to go to a public school only a few towns over. This experience was painful at times, but it also allowed me so many opportunities that other kids I grew up with were never afforded. This is tragic. These personal experiences and my role as a public servant compel me to lend my voice to proposals such as S.B. 1024 to help close racial gaps in our state.

This bill is an excellent first step to end the segregation that, while not explicit in statute, is created and reinforced in our state laws and local regulations. As a former City Council President, I am sensitive to the need for local control and the argument that communities know what's best for their residents. Unfortunately, that argument has been used throughout history to justify continuation of discriminatory policies at the local level. We can no longer afford to look the other way and protect the status quo. Now is the time to end policies that are detrimental to our communities and only serve to further divide us.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **S.B. 1024**. I urge the Committee to act favorably.