

Testimony in Support of SB 1024

This past year, much of the population's consciences have been aroused to systemic racism within the country. It is evidently in our criminal justice system, but it is also within our housing. I see it as one of Connecticut's most pressing matters to extend the ideals of inclusivity and acceptance preached elsewhere into our real estate policies.

Diversity is critical in any community, and I specifically want to see a more inclusive Fairfield County. I believe our current zoning system locks out families of lower incomes, where the prosperity of certain towns is designed to be wholly inaccessible to those outside the self-perpetuating cycle of wealth inheritance. Of 3 million zones acres in CT, 90.6% is zoned for single-family homes. Indirectly, this can become a handicap on integration. There are researchable tangible benefits to growing up surrounded by those that come from all different backgrounds – from age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status– that the current zoning laws deprive CT residents of. Furthermore, where one resides often determines the opportunities offered. I believe all students are entitled to a high quality education similar to the one I am receiving at Greenwich High School. As a minority student who has grown up in Fairfield County, I am acutely aware of the misrepresentation of people of color in high-achieving classrooms. There are of course several factors behind this, but affordable housing opens the gate to the state mending inequities. Namely, SB 1024 moves the state of Connecticut away from its national legacy of using zoning to maintain status quos that are rooted in history's racism and discrimination.

I specifically support SB 1024's proposals because they are multi-faceted, being simultaneously economically and environmentally advantageous alongside its initial aims. Transit-oriented development reduces the amount of cars on the road, and therefore pollution, and it is an antidote to urban sprawl. Similarly, housing can be strategically implemented to be near main streets, where new customers will support small businesses. SB 1024 does not seek to radicalize our institutions or irrevocably plummet property values, but is an incomparable and feasible method of desegregating the state.