

March 22, 2021

## TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SB1024 SB1068

*Honorable Co-chairs Cassano and McCarthy Vahey, Ranking Members Hwang and Zullo, and esteemed members of the Committee. I am Janet Cling of Darien.*

*I am writing to testify in strong opposition of Bills SB1024 and SB1068. I am supportive of Affordable Housing, but this bill coupled with SB1024's Section 6 providing developers As-of-Right permitting, will lead to the upper class flight and a run on Fairfield County. Last Monday, we heard from so many residents, town leaders, local planning and zoning chair and commission members, why As-of-Right permitting will have the opposite effect of increasing affordable housing. We are allowing developers to bypass local inclusionary zoning requirements, while punishing the towns with a state-wide property tax for the problem the State has helped create.*

*We have all heard both leaders of DesegregateCT and members of your committee refer to the Econ101 concept of "more housing supply leads to lower home prices". However that statement being made in this context is naive, given the dramatic disparity between Fairfield County land prices and other areas in CT. We know that prices of downtown condos near train stations in Fairfield County will NOT come down far enough to be affordable by low income families. What it will do is depress the home value of the existing housing stock of our towns. 1024 will make it impossible for towns to meet the 10% AH requirement in 8-30g, because you're flooding the town with even more luxury condo units, thus increasing the total number of units while driving down the ratio of AH in a town.*

*The way it's currently worded in bill 1024, builders are not required to make any units affordable if they're building under 10 units. Even if builders are willing to build more than 10 units and did only so from when the bill passes, they're only required to make 10% of it affordable. So it does nothing to increase the AH percentage in our existing housing stock. Yet, that is the best case scenario. 1024 also says builders must build a minimum of 15 units on an one-acre lot. Once current one-acre zones are changed to a TOD zone, developers can easily subdivide an one-acre lot they bought into two separate lots, to stay under the 10 unit threshold for having to provide below-market-rate units. And build 8 units on one, and 8 on the other, so now our town's total housing units just went up by 16 with zero new affordable units. So not only is the State not helping us achieve our 10% AH goal, it will actually slow-down our progress and change our trajectory towards our goal, while penalizing us financially.*

*Everyone in Fairfield County knows the painful experience of depressed property value from 2014 to 2020. We're only now seeing a slight appreciation due to the exodus from New York City post Covid. We have no idea how long that will last as rental markets in New York City have already begun to tick-up. This is especially not the time to implement such draconian state zoning and taxation mandates. If we let bills like SB1024 eviscerate Fairfield County's land wealth, property tax receipts will be reduced for both the towns and the State even if you pass this bill SB1068. Also, when our land value is reduced, we will be forced to raise mill rates to maintain the same level of property taxes, and that will further harm the low-income families that managed to get AH in our towns and discourage racial and economic diversity.*

*This is how people get trapped in their biggest asset, when they see their home value go down so much, and mill rates keep rising, while services get reduced. It won't be the multi-millionaires that will be trapped here, those people have the most mobility and can work from anywhere. A large number of Fairfield County workers are tied to Wall Street but after Covid, a lot of financial services firms have opened outposts in other States. So their employees are no longer handcuffed to the proximity to NYC. They'll just cut their losses and leave, and their property and income tax receipts will go with them.*

*I strongly urge you to VOTE NO on Bills SB1068 as well as SB1024.*

*Thank you for reading my testimony.*

Janet Cling  
Darien