

March 12, 2021

Planning and Development Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

Re: Strengthening the Zoning Enabling Act and Furthering Fair Housing

To Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Janice Elliott and I am a resident of Hamden. **I write today to urge your support for two bills:**

H.B. No. 6107 'An Act Concerning the Reorganization of the Zoning Enabling Act and the Promotion of Municipal Compliance'

H.B. No. 6613 'An Act Concerning Accessory Apartments, Middle Housing and Multifamily Housing'

And your support with amendments for the following bill:

S.B. No. 1026, 'An Act Concerning Training for Certain Planning and Zoning Officials

I write today as private citizen who has lived and worked in Connecticut for four decades. I retired in 2019 from a long career working to expand housing opportunities in Connecticut communities through development, finance, education, and philanthropy. In my work - and where I live - I have witnessed first-hand the benefits that good quality, well designed multi-unit housing brings to local neighborhoods and their residents: vibrant local economies, diversity, affordability, walkability, and more. I have also witnessed on many occasions first-hand efforts to prohibit such housing through exclusionary zoning practices, often in the name of preserving community "character". These practices serve to deepen our racial and economic segregation, hurting our state's residents, communities and economy.

H.B. 6107 promotes the state's policy goal of encouraging all municipalities to plan for multi-family housing and housing affordable to low and moderate-income families. Further, it requires zoning regulations affirmatively further the purposes of the federal Fair Housing Act and removes the highly subjective "character of the district" consideration. Indeed, all reasonable aspects of "character" are fully covered by other sections of Section 8-2, including considerations of historic preservation, environmental impact, density, scale, location and the suitability of uses.

H.B. 6613 permits Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and small multifamily housing more broadly and without undue restrictions. This will promote the incremental growth of our lower cost housing supply, bringing new residents to town centers and transit station areas while continuing to allow municipalities to control the physical and site characteristics of their community through their zoning ordinance, the health code, building code, and other regulations.

S.B. 1026 allows municipalities to require members of planning and zoning commissions to be trained. **I urge you to amend the bill** to 1) increase the minimum hours of training from four to five (5) hours annually, 2) require all members of planning and zoning

commissions in Connecticut meet this minimum standard, and 3) direct the state to develop such a training curriculum, to be administered in-person and online.

I love living in Connecticut. At the same time, as a citizen I am embarrassed and appalled that 73% of our state's Black and Latino families live in low and very low opportunity areas. Exclusionary zoning practices have fostered and maintained this segregation for decades. It is our state's Achilles heel, holding us back from achieving the equitable economic growth that is otherwise possible.

Please vote for these bills to be sent to the House and Senate for their full consideration and passage. Thank you for all you do to ensure a stronger and more equitable Connecticut.

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