



**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**

**Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut
March 15, 2021**

Chairs and members of the Planning and Development committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify 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 on the part of Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut.

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut's mission is to serve as a catalyst that engages residents and communities in shaping a democratic health system that provides universal access to quality, affordable, equitable health care and promotes health in Connecticut. We believe that health care is a fundamental right and that our work is part of a broader movement for social and economic justice.

Our health system is more than just hospitals and doctors, insurers, and pharmaceutical companies. We know that social determinants of health – where people live, work, play and pray – are more important than the health care system itself. We are supporting this bill because of zoning's impact on where people live and their health.

Why Zoning Matters to Health

DataHaven, a data-focused nonprofit, has put together a series of reports on the well-being of people in Connecticut. These reports illustrate stark health differences between people living in cities and in suburbs. Your zip code determines whether you are likely to suffer from obesity, diabetes, asthma and other respiratory disease, and premature death. It also determines how long you live. Zoning reform that enables everyone to have more choices about where they live is essential to improving health outcomes for all Connecticut residents.

Residential segregation leads to bad health outcomes, pushing low- and middle-income residents into neighborhoods without access to grocery stores, healthcare services, and good air and water quality.

The connection between land use and public health has never been clearer.

Studies that show that Connecticut's current zoning system not only creates - but requires - sprawl. According to [recent research](#), the majority of Connecticut's residential land is zoned for a minimum of one-acre minimum lot size. This means that our houses

are spread apart, which means we drive more, which means we pollute our air more. With one-acre minimum lot sizes, we also push outward to destroy forests, and the trees that clean our air. This all has an impact on our health.

Transit-Oriented Development

The transit-oriented development proposal in SB 1024 would open up housing availability in high opportunity areas. This proposal would pave the way for denser, middle housing in these areas that is likely to be more affordable to more people.

These provisions would also spur residential development in high opportunity neighborhoods and areas with easy access to jobs and services. Residents who live near transit have substantially lower carbon footprints because they spend less time in their cars, if they even have one at all. Our regulations should be encouraging sustainable living patterns rather than outlawing them.

Parking

Another important proposal this bill has is to cap, and in some areas eliminate, mandatory minimum parking. Parking requirements induce more driving over the use of other transportation options, from mass transit to walking to rideshare and carshare.

Parking requirements drive up the cost to build new housing, adding on \$21,000 to the cost to build new housing units. As a result, residents of new developments pay more in housing costs—or, worse, this barrier to new development prevents new housing from being built at all.

High parking requirements are inequitable, forcing households with one or no cars to subsidize higher income households with two or three cars. Studies indicate that at peak times, 30% of parking spaces in residential buildings sit unused.

Developers can and do provide parking spaces when it makes sense to do so and when prospective residents will demand it—but local governments should not be mandating parking, particularly in excess of the modest caps set in SB 1024.

Conclusion

We urge you to pass this bill out of committee, as these proposals not only protect our environment, take steps to end housing segregation, and address equity issues, they could directly impact our health for the better. As an organization that believes health and health care is a human right, we see this proposal as one way we can address those social determinants of health that impact our well-being.

Thank you for your consideration.