



WESTPORTSM
CONNECTICUT

Jennifer S. Tooker, First Selectwoman

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Planning & Development Committee
pctestimony@cga.ct.gov

Verbal Testimony re HB 5429

Senator Cassano, Representative McCarthy-Vahey, Senator Hwang, Representative Zullo and members of the Planning and Development Committee. My name is Jennifer Tooker and I am the newly-elected First Selectwoman of Westport. Thank you to Representative Steinberg for allowing me and our Planning and Zoning Commission Chair Danielle Dobin to jointly testify.

I want to express my opposition to HB 5429. I understand the bill intends to foster hubs of commercial and residential activity around public transit stations, therefore increasing economic opportunity with minimum impact on the environment. Unfortunately, it will have the opposite effect in many areas. Let me talk to you about one example in my town - the Saugatuck train station in Westport.

I served as Second Selectwoman the previous four years with a specific focus on Economic Development, interacting with our local business owners and ensuring that Westport remains a great place to start and grow a business. While we have one large employer in town, the remainder of our commercial landscape is primarily locally-owned, small to medium sized businesses. The area around the Saugatuck train station is filled with local businesses and shared work-space. It is exactly the type of commercial environment that our Westport business owners want and need to stay viable. This bill would encourage development that would make it difficult for them to remain, thus damaging the core of our business community.

A particular focus of my administration is to ensure we are a community where everyone feels like they belong. That is a bold statement with many related issues for residents, business owners and visitors alike. One obvious issue is housing, which is the focus of this bill. Westport is serious about diversifying our housing. We have made progress in recent years and are actively working on a strategy through the 830-j process and plan. Respectfully, please allow us to continue to do the work we know we need to do - and are doing - as a community and stop proposing one-size-fits-all bills with unintended negative consequences.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak and for your consideration.

Kind Regards,

/Jennifer S. Tooker/
Jennifer S. Tooker
First Selectwoman
Town of Westport