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New Haven City Planning Commission
Via email: publictestimony@newhavenct.gov
165 Church Street,
New Haven, CT 06510

RE: ZONING ORDINANCE CITY OF NEW HAVEN, CT § 43.1-13b – Request for Amendment

Dear New Haven City Planning Commission,

I am a student at a top five environmental master's program at Yale School of the Environment and the number one environmental law school in the country, Pace Law School. Throughout my law school and master's career, I have gathered experience in advising land use regulatory efforts to further climate resilient development and sustainability. Upon my arrival in New Haven, I have noticed that the city takes visible efforts to increase sustainability¹ and upon reading the City's Code of Ordinances, it is clear that New Haven prioritizes public health and welfare.² With this request for an amendment to the design standards for public plazas, I aim to support these goals.

To support New Havens goals of promoting sustainability and protecting public health and welfare, the New Haven City Planning Commission should amend ZONING ORDINANCE CITY OF NEW HAVEN, CT § 43.1-13b to include a provision on promoting biodiversity for all planting and trees covered by this section of the ordinance. Specifically, New Haven should add the following italicized language to the existing enumerated provisions:

43.1-13b - Planting and Trees.

The provisions of this Section are intended to facilitate a combination of landscaping elements in order to provide comfort, shade and textural variety.

...

(9) All planting of trees, shrubs, and associated vegetation should be designed to promote biodiversity, supporting the natural habitat and ecological balance within the jurisdiction.

If New Haven does not adopt this provision, keeping urban development business as usual, the city faces the risk of reducing biodiversity and imminent health risks as a result. Urban development has the direct effect of reducing biodiversity, and through biodiversity loss has the

¹ ZONING ORDINANCE CITY OF NEW HAVEN, CT § 43(b)(2).


² ZONING ORDINANCE CITY OF NEW HAVEN, CT §§ 75–84.

indirect effect of increasing potential pathogen transmission and reducing human physical and mental health. Urban development directly reduces biodiversity by altering landscapes through land cover change and spatial construction that fragments urban greenspaces. These processes reduce genetic diversity of the biotic community, consequently causing a reduction of overall species biodiversity. Reduced biodiversity increases human health risks by enhancing pathogen transmission because they are concentrated among low numbers of species and the potential prevalence of an infected ‘vector’ is higher. Further human resilience to diseases is reduced because of the reduced ecosystem services correlated with lower biodiversity levels. Typically, biodiverse areas provide humans with strong microbiome (which supports immunity levels) and improved mental health. But with low biodiversity, humans will face lower immunity levels and lower overall mental health.

By adding the proposed amendment to the zoning ordinance, New Haven’s City Planning Commission will be taking active effort to support biodiversity, and thus support its constituents’ health and welfare. Such of which are purported directives of the code of ordinances.

Thank you for the consideration of the above outlined amendment to the ZONING ORDINANCE CITY OF NEW HAVEN, CT § 43.1-13b. Please see the supporting scientific synthesis further outlining the ways urban development is linked to biodiversity loss and human health.

Sincerely,



Lauren Lynam