



Corporation for Supportive Housing - NJ

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April 8, 2010

The Honorable Richard Codey
449 Mount Pleasant Avenue
West Orange, New Jersey 07052

Dear Senator Codey,

We want to clarify some confusion around Senate Bill 1 sponsored by Senators Lesniak, Bateman and Van Drew. We, the special needs housing providers signed below, ask you to oppose S1. This bill will set housing development for New Jersey's homeless and special needs communities back 15 years. It will adversely affect your legacy of improving the lives of people with disabilities.

New Jersey needs more affordable housing opportunities for individuals and families who are homeless and/or have special needs. Both Governor Christie and Senator Raymond Lesniak have said that NJ needs more housing opportunities near jobs and transportation. Despite his words in support of these changes, Sen. Lesniak's proposal to reform the state's housing system (S1) does not achieve these goals.

S1 would exempt nearly every NJ municipality from having any fair share housing obligation unless they choose to grow, by defining a broad new category of municipality called the "inclusionary community." Many towns will choose NOT to grow. These towns will have NO affordable housing obligation to meet the housing needs of people with disabilities. If S1 is passed, towns where growth is occurring will be able to meet their obligation without providing for the housing needs of people who are homeless and/or disabled.

If S1 is passed, new developments of 20 or more units would be required to provide a 20 percent set-aside of low and moderate income housing, with smaller developments required to provide a 5 percent set-aside. Developers, *at their exclusive option*, could substitute off-site construction, off-site rehabilitation, or payment of an "in lieu fee", for the required units (Sections 21 and 22). Developers may well choose the cheapest option which may be rehabilitation or a payment of an in lieu fee. The bill does not specify the extent of rehabilitation work that must be done or the cost of the "in lieu fee."

Furthermore, when a developer or a town does choose to address special needs housing much less housing will get built. Specific provisions include:

- The 13% very low income requirement, which was an incentive to address special needs housing, is repealed by this bill.
- There is no requirement for a town to use their "in lieu fee." Some towns may choose

not to use it and let the state take the money after 4 years, which is a back door to an RCA type arrangement.

- Other towns will only use their money for rehabilitation of existing housing.
- A town has less money to address housing needs. The statewide non-residential developer fee created by A500 is repealed. Municipalities are barred from enacting local development fees on residential or non-residential development for affordable housing
- A town can ignore any prior unmet housing obligation. Many municipalities have plans to meet this prior unmet housing obligation with special needs housing – plans that would be abandoned if this bill passes. The bill abolishes all outstanding municipal fair share obligations imposed by COAH, or by “any law or fact” prior to the enactment of this bill, thus giving each municipality a ‘clean slate’ on which to self-determine its affordable housing obligations going forward. .

Supportive housing offers people an affordable place to live and access to supportive services that are needed to keep them housed, such as medical care, behavioral health care, and job training. Supportive housing is specifically designed to break the cycle of long-term homelessness where individuals and families find themselves on the streets, moving in and out of temporary shelters, and eventually homeless again. S1 will reinforce the unfortunate cycle.

We would like to meet with you to discuss specific amendments for improving this bill.

Signed: 

Signed by: Alison Recca-Ryan
04/08/10 10:15 AM -04:00

Alison Recca-Ryan, Director
CSH – NJ

Attachment: List of all signers of this letter

cc: NJ Assembly Members
NJ House Members