2016-17 State Legislative Policy Priorities

The lack of affordable homes in New Jersey harms our residents and stifles our economy. This situation was made worse by Superstorm Sandy. Vacant properties hamper the revitalization efforts of communities, and the foreclosure crisis continues to obstruct our state’s economic recovery. We continue to advocate for policies and programs that address New Jersey’s housing crisis, promote community development and move our state forward, including:

Tools to help produce more affordable homes for lower income families:

- **Create new financing mechanisms** (S1852/A3551) sponsored by Sen. Lesniak and Asm. Singleton. $600 million in tax credit available to developers to construct affordable, mixed-income housing developments in low income neighborhoods. *Passed Senate Economic Growth Committee 3.10.16. Passed Assembly Housing and Community Development 2.27.17*
- **"New Jersey Residential Foreclosure Transformation Act."** (S1853) sponsored by Sen. Lesniak. This bill creates the "NJ Foreclosure Transformation Program" as a temporary program within the NJHMFA ("HMFA") for the purpose of purchasing foreclosed residential properties from institutional lenders and dedicating them for occupancy as affordable homes. *Passed Senate Economic Growth Committee 3.10.16.*
- **Increase relocation assistance based on the increase of the CPI** (A2022/S718) sponsored by Asm. Green and Senator Cruz-Perez. Relocation assistance has not increased since 1972! This bill provides for a 4.5-fold increase in all of the statutory assistance amounts over two years, and for the indexing of the amounts to changes in the CPI-U beginning 36 months after the effective date of the bill. *Passed Assembly Housing and Community Development 10.6.16.*
- **"New Jersey Housing Assistance for Veterans Act,"** (A306/S2017) sponsored by Asm. Singleton and Senators Allen and Beach. Establishes a pilot program to assist low income or disabled veterans with housing modification and rehabilitation; appropriates $5 million. *Passed Assembly Appropriations Committee 12.15.16*
- **Establishes additional $75 county recording fees to increase funding to the "New Jersey Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF)."** (A912) sponsored by Asw. Vainieri Huttle and Oliver.

Preserve the State Budget and Production Funding: The State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) was level-funded in this year’s budget, despite a tremendous need for more rental vouchers. The state budget should fund the rehabilitation and construction of homes that are affordable to low and moderate income residents, and not use the AHTF to fill budget gaps. The Network will continue to advocate for increased funding for SRAP, preserve housing production dollars and expand the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program (NRTC).
Ensure an Equitable, Sustainable Sandy Recovery: The Network will continue to partner with our allies to advocate that federal Sandy recovery funds address the critical housing needs of people who were impacted by the storm.

- **Ensures fairness of project deadlines, enhances transparency, and creates foreclosure protections for Superstorm Sandy victims.** (A333/S2300) sponsored by Asm. Singleton and Sen. Stack. Passed both Houses 12.19.16. **Signed by the Governor 2.10.17**
- "**Superstorm Sandy Homeowners Protection Act.**" (S532/A1340) sponsored by Senator Beck and Asm. Rible. Passed Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee 6.16.16

Reduce the Impact of Foreclosures and Address Problem Properties: NJ continues to be one of the states with the worst foreclosure problems. We support the following initiatives:

- **Creates Mortgage Assistance Pilot Program** (A303/S1629) sponsored by Asm. Singleton and Senator Van Drew. Creates a pilot program that allows homeowners with negative home equity, and who are in default of a mortgage owned by the agency, to lower the remaining principal owed on the mortgage to an amount more reflective of current market realities. This will occur in exchange for conveying an equity share in the property to the agency. Passed Assembly Appropriations Committee 1.30.17
- **Foreclosure Prevention Funding:** (A2036/S344) sponsored by Asm. Green/Sen. Stack. Creates a Foreclosure Prevention and Neighborhood Stabilization Revolving Trust Fund; places temporary surcharge on mortgage foreclosure complaints. The fund will be financed through a temporary $1,200 surcharge placed on each foreclosure complaint filed in the State. DCA shall provide up to $500,000 from the fund to train qualified vendors to provide training to local governments and non-profit entities undertaking neighborhood stabilization efforts. The Department may utilize $500,000 in the first year of the fund, and $300,000 each year thereafter, for the purpose of collecting and disseminating foreclosure data. Following these disbursements from the fund, the next $10 million collected during the fiscal year shall be allocated to qualified non-profit entities for the purpose of maintaining or expanding their foreclosure prevention programs. Entities receiving these funds shall issue quarterly reports detailing the success of their foreclosure prevention programs.
- **Codifies and funds the Foreclosure Mediation Program.** (A1029/S1130) sponsored by Asw. Jasey and Senator Rice. This bill also dedicates monies from foreclosure filing fees and fines to administer the program. Passed Assembly Housing Committee 5.12.16
- **Establishes process for short sale buyers during residential mortgage foreclosures.** (A2060/S2333) sponsored by Asm. Gusciora and Senator Cruz-Perez. This bill would require lenders participating in a short sale to respond to a good faith offer within 60 days. Passed Assembly 6.30.16
- **Revises residential mortgage foreclosure to require mortgage loan servicers to initiate a process to consider loss mitigation options through the New Jersey Judiciary Foreclosure Mediation Program under certain circumstances and to establish the New Jersey Foreclosure Prevention Fund** (A3346/S2269) sponsored by Asm. Green and Sen. Diegnan.
- **Hold Creditors responsible for Non-residential buildings** (A2952/S1631) sponsored by Asm. Andrzejczak/Land and Senator Van Drew. Requires creditors to maintain vacant and abandoned non-residential properties under foreclosure.
- **Hold Creditors responsible for building interiors.** (A2953/S1630) sponsored by Asm. Andrzejczak/Land and Senator Van Drew. Requires creditors to maintain the interior of vacant and abandoned residential properties under foreclosure.
Protect the Homeless:
- **Code Blue** (A815/S1088) sponsored by Asm. Land/Andrzejczak and Senator Van Drew. Requires county emergency management coordinators to establish Code Blue Program to shelter homeless during severe weather events. *Passed Assembly 3.16.17. Passed Senate 2.13.2017. Awaiting action from the Governor*
- **Exempts homeless from fee for birth certificates** (A2106/S2351) sponsored by Asm Mukherji and Senator Ruiz. This bill permits homeless people to obtain free certified copies of their birth certificates by submitting a request for the certificate to the State Registrar of Vital Statistics through a social worker or through the coordinator of the emergency shelter for the homeless where the person is temporarily residing. *Signed into law by the Governor 1.9.17.*
- **Exempts homeless from fee for non-driver identification cards** (A2107/S2350) sponsored by Asm. Mukherji and Senator Ruiz. *Signed into law by the Governor 1.9.17.*
- **Provides for emergency assistance** to individuals or families that are homeless or in temporary living arrangement due to domestic violence (S2845/A4406) sponsored by Senator Weinberg and Benson. *Passed Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee 1.9.17*
- **Concerns emergency assistance which is repaid by the recipient** (S2852/A4295) sponsored by Sen. Sweeney and Asw. Muoio. The bill would require the Department of Human Services to disregard any months of emergency assistance for which payments issued by the State to the recipient were repaid by the recipient from a recipient’s 12 month lifetime limit of emergency assistance. *Passed both Houses 1.23.17. Signed into law by the Governor 3.13.17*
- **Allows individual to receive additional lifetime emergency assistance under certain circumstances** (S2853/A4296) sponsored by Sen. Sweeney and Asw. Muoio. This bill would require that the Commissioner of Human Services nullify any months of emergency assistance that were received by an individual more than 84 months (seven years) prior to an application for emergency assistance. *Passed Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee 1.9.17. Passed Assembly Human Services Committee 12.12.16.*
- **Allows County's to increase the surcharge for County Homeless Trust Funds** (A4132/S3046) sponsored by Asm Mukherji; Asw. Chaparro and Senator Cunningham. Permits up to seven dollar increase in surcharge for document recordation with county in support of county homelessness housing trust funds. *Passed Assembly Housing and Community Development 2.27.17*
- **Protect tenants from discriminatory screening practices** (A4612/S3037) sponsored by Asm. McKeon and Senator Codey.
- **Security deposit pilot program** (A4202/S3038) sponsored by Asw. Quijano and Sen. Cunningham.
- **Codifies and enhances use of breach of implied warranty of habitability as defense to certain eviction actions.** (A4610/S3036) sponsored by Asm. McKeon and Senator Codey.
- **Removes restrictions on convicted drug offenders receiving general assistance benefits under Work First New Jersey program.** (A889/S601) sponsored by Asw. Muoio and Senator Cunningham. *Approved into law, P.L.2016, c.69. 11.30.16*

Lead Poisoning Prevention and Healthy Homes:
- **Requires municipalities to conduct lead paint inspections in one and two family rental units** (S1937/A3585) sponsored by Senator Turner and Asw. Muoio/ Asm. Gusciora/Schaer. *Passed Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism & Historic Preservation Committee 3.14.16. Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee 1.12.17*
• Requires a lead safe certificate by 3rd party at time of rental turnover (A3611/S2879) sponsored by Asw. Muoio/Sen. Ruiz. Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee 1.12.17
• Establishes permit requirements and provides for adoption of regulations for inspection of asbestos (A4309) sponsored by Asm. Schaer. Passed by Assembly 1.23.17
• Requires compilation of, and public access to, tests of soil lead levels sales (A4304/S2957) sponsored by Asm. Conaway/Senator Cruz-Perez. Passed Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee 1.12.17
• Requires soil testing to determine lead content prior to certain home sales (A4305) sponsored by Asm. Conaway Senator Cruz-Perez. Passed Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee 1.12.17
• Requires DEP to adopt Statewide plan to reduce lead exposure from contaminated soils and drinking water (A4306) sponsored by Asm. Conaway Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee 1.12.17
• Require public and nonpublic schools to test for and remediate lead in drinking water, and disclose their test results (A3539/S2082) sponsored by Asw. Muoio and Senator Turner. Passed Assembly 12.19.16
• Requires various measures to address effects of low levels of lead exposure. (A159/S1588) sponsored by Asw. Tucker/Jasey and Senator Rice. This bill will enable school personnel to know if a child has a history of elevated blood lead levels, and will require schools to educate staff and parents about the dangers of lead exposure.
• Requires DOH regulations regarding blood lead levels in children to be consistent with Centers for Disease Control recommendations. (S1830/A3411) Sponsored by Sen. Vitale/Rice and Asw. Muoio. Passed both houses 12.19.16. Signed by the Governor 2.6.17.

Advance Housing Policies to Move NJ Forward: We will work to ensure that the recent Supreme Court’s Mount Laurel decision will result in new rules that promote housing opportunities throughout the state. We oppose S2254/A3821 sponsored by Greenstein/Bateman and DeAngelo/Benson. This bill would allow municipalities to NOT have to plan for homes that would have been built in the last 15 years, had the COAH rules been functional (also known as the “gap period”). The Network opposes this proposal because low and moderate income families lived in NJ during that time and their housing need did not disappear simply because towns do not want to meet their obligations.
• Disclosure of rental property ownership (A4100/S2612) sponsored by Asm. Dancer and Sen. Thompson. Require a limited liability company that owns residential property containing one to four dwelling units to disclose the individual members of the company when it files a deed for recording.

For the complete text of any of these bills, go to www.njleg.state.nj.us and search by bill number. For more information about these issues, contact Arnold Cohen or Staci Berger, 609/393-3752.

*Updated 5.11.2017