

# Advocacy Toolkit

TO HOUSENJ

Housing and  
Community  
Development



Network of New Jersey

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## About HouseNJ

Housing insecurity is one of the biggest threats to public health and safety at any time. NJ's increasing unaffordability coupled with a growing deficit of affordable homes puts more individuals and families at risk of homelessness and with it, the financial, physical, and mental health challenges that come with housing instability. The Network's *HouseNJ* 2025 plan advocates for transformative housing resources and investing in our communities in the Garden State.

### NJ FY2026 BUDGET ASK

The FY2026 budget must plan for and grow essential housing and housing production resources, as we embark on the 4th round under Mount Laurel. The first, and most important step is to grow New Jersey's Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF), the major, dedicated source of funding for affordable home creation in New Jersey. We can do this by expanding the state's realty transfer fee, the AHTF funding source, so it better reflects the state's housing production needs. The FY26 budget should include the following:

**Grow the Affordable Housing Trust Fund:** The AHTF is being used to fund housing security, stability and affordability programs as well as production. Our leaders must preserve the intended use of the AHTF and ensure that construction and rehabilitation resources remain available to fill the need for more affordable homes to be built. It is also imperative that we help keep families in their homes by

investing in eviction and homeless prevention services utilizing housing first, rapid housing and support for small, mom and pop landlords.

**Create Housing Revenue Streams through Luxury Home Sales:** We encourage the creation of a new revenue source through the sale of homes over \$2 million, that could fund vital programs that make living and raising a family in the state more affordable, and the impact of this fee would be limited to a small fraction of the housing market.

**Lower the rent:** NJ should adopt a fee on for-profit, luxury developments that could be forgiven or refunded if the landlord provides affordable units through inclusionary zoning and/or keeps rent increases at a reasonable rate.

**Make evictors pay:** Network members enthusiastically support A4964, sponsored by Asm. Gabriel Rodriguez, which would increase the eviction filing fee to \$150, up from the current \$50. This increased fee would be deposited directly into DCA's Office of Homelessness Prevention. Revenue could also be used to provide critical resources for eviction diversion counseling, rental assistance and/or legal counsel for lower income tenants.

**Fund Homelessness Diversion and Eviction Prevention Programs:** It is essential to continue financing proven solutions, such as diversion and eviction prevention programs, which help individuals avoid homelessness. Additionally, we need to support our shelter system to keep those experiencing homelessness safe and provide ongoing support to assist people in finding permanent housing. The 2023 statewide Point-in-Time Count indicates that, for the first time since 2015, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness has exceeded 10,000.

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## Message Points

## **Topline Message Points:**

- Rising housing costs, inflation, and a shrinking safety net is eating away at household budgets and leaving many of our families teetering on the brink of homelessness.
- The solution is simple: start with the basics. If we build homes we can afford, and revitalize the communities where we work and live, we can build help to *HouseNJ*.
- We're calling on New Jersey's elected leaders to invest in our future by growing essential housing and housing production resources.
- New Jersey's greatest strength is its people. Our sons and daughters can't afford to come back and start their own lives here, and our seniors struggle to stay near their loved ones in their golden years. We want everyone who calls New Jersey home to be able to afford to live here.

## **Sub-Messages:**

### ***PROMOTES EQUALITY***

- New Jersey is at its best when our communities are strong. We take pride in our diversity and look after our families, friends and neighbors.
- That's why we need to make sure that people from all backgrounds can afford homes in the communities where they work and live.
- Whether you're a student, a family with kids, or a senior hoping to retire, New Jersey must continue to be a place to call home.

### ***GOOD FOR THE ECONOMY***

- By building homes we can afford and revitalizing our communities, we can create thousands of new jobs, support businesses and boost economic activity, all across the state.
- This is an investment we should make now, one that will begin to pay back dividends immediately.
- An investment in affordable homes for New Jersey residents will result in tangible benefits that we see and feel every day, right in the communities where we work and live.
- We can't afford to do nothing. If our kids can't afford to come home and put down roots in New Jersey, the state's future will be grim.

### ***WILL BENEFIT ALL NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS***

- Our families, friends and neighbors are the heart of our state. They are what make New Jersey the place we want to call home. But our sons and daughters can't afford to come back and start their own lives here, and our seniors struggle to stay near their loved ones in their

golden years. We want everyone who calls New Jersey home to be able to afford to live here.

- It doesn't matter where you live: when we invest in homes we can afford in the communities where we work and live, we are investing in our families, friends and neighbors.
- This economic investment will reach people across the state.
- This investment will help create homes so that New Jersey residents with disabilities can live with dignity and independence, in safe communities among their families, friends and neighbors.
- When we work together to *HouseNJ*, we can create homes our veterans can afford, which is the very least we can do for the people who have put their lives on the line for our country.
- Investing in affordable homes will also reduce homelessness.

### ***THE STATE SHOULD LEAD***

- Our elected officials and leaders in Trenton are responsible for building a better New Jersey. We vote them into office for the purpose of leading and helping the state build strong communities.
- Many of New Jersey's municipalities are willing and ready to develop more affordable homes. They want their residents to be able to stay and contribute to their communities, but they need our state leaders to provide the resources to make that a reality.



## Influential Legislative Representatives

Network members and allies should be meeting with members of the NJ Senate and Assembly who represent the districts where there live and work. There are several legislators who are particularly influential to budget process that we need to keep engaged in our efforts:

## NJ Senators

Nicholas Scutari (D) LD-22 Somerset & Union

Paul Sarlo (D) LD-36 Bergen & Passaic

Linda Greenstein (D) LD-14 Mercer & Middlesex

Carmen Amato (R) LD-9 Ocean

Renee Burgess (D) LD-28 Essex & Union

John Burzichelli (D) LD-3 Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem

Nilsa Cruz-Perez (D) LD-5 Camden & Gloucester

Patrick Diegnan (D) LD-18 Middlesex

Gordon Johnson (D) LD-37 Bergen

Declan O'Scanlon (R) LD-13 Monmouth

Teresa Ruiz (D) LD-29 Essex & Hudson

Douglas J. Steinhard (R) LD-23 Hunterdon, Somerset and Warren

Michael Testa (R) LD-1 Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland

Andrew Zwicker (D) LD-16 Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex and Somerset

## NJ Assemblymembers

Craig Coughlin (D) LD-19 Middlesex

Eliana Pintor Marin (D) LD-29 Essex & Hudson

Ellen J. Park (D) LD-37 Bergen

Al Barlas (R) LD-40 Bergen, Essex & Passaic

Aura K. Dunn (R) LD-25 Morris & Passaic

Nancy F. Muñoz (R) LD-21 Middlesex, Morris, Somerset and Union

Carol A. Murphy (D) LD-7 Burlington

Verlina Reynolds-Jackson (D) LD-15 Hunterdon and Mercer

Gabriel Rodriguez (D) LD-33 Hudson

Brian E. Rumpf (R) LD-9 Ocean

Gary S. Schaer (D) LD-36 Bergen & Passaic

Gerry Scharfenberger (R) LD-13 Monmouth

William W. Spearman (D) LD-5 Camden and Gloucester

Michael Venezia (D) LD-34 Essex

Roy Freiman (D) LD-16 Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex and Somerset

Yvonne Lopez (D) LD-19 Middlesex

### SAMPLE LETTER FOR OUTREACH:

Dear Representative,

The FY2026 budget must plan for and grow essential housing and housing production resources, as we embark on the 4th round under Mount Laurel. The first, and most important step is to grow New Jersey's Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF), the major, dedicated source of funding for affordable

home creation in New Jersey. We can do this by expanding the state's realty transfer fee, the AHTF funding source, so it better reflects the state's housing production needs.

We cannot do this if the AHTF is diverted for other, non-affordable programmatic needs. The AHTF must remain dedicated to affordable home production under 80 percent AMI.

With anticipated reductions in federal funding, New Jersey's budget needs to allocate more state resources to build affordable homes and to eliminate homelessness. Ensuring that everyone in the Garden State has a safe and stable place to call home is essential.

Sincerely,

**INSERT YOUR NAME, YOUR ORGANIZATION, WHERE YOU'RE FROM**

*\*Feel free to customize your letter to reflect your personal experience within your organization*

## Events

### **Budget Hearings ~ Budget Registration | NJ Legislature**

#### *Assembly Budget Committee*

- Tuesday, March 25, 2025 at 9:30am - Public Hearing  
State House Annex, Committee Room 11, 4th Floor 145 W. State Street
- Monday, April 21, 2025 at 1PM - Dept. of Community Affairs  
State House Annex, Committee Room 11, 4th Floor 145 W. State Street

#### *Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee*

- Wednesday, March 26, 2025 at 10:00 AM  
New Jersey Institute of Technology Campus Center Atrium 150 Bleeker Street
- Thursday, April 10, 2025 at 10:00 AM  
This hearing will be conducted remotely without the possibility of in-person attendance.
- Tuesday, April 29, 2025 at 10AM - Dept. of Community Affairs
- State House Annex, Committee Room 4, 1st Floor 145 W. State Street

### **The Network's Annual Legislative Day ~ JUNE TBA**

#### **Advocacy Team Meetings:**

Atlantic	Tuesday, April 8th	11:00 AM
Camden	Friday, April 18th	11:00 AM
Hudson	Tuesday, April 29th	11:00 AM
Mercer	Wednesday, April 9th	12:00 PM
Middlesex	Wednesday, April 16th	12:00 PM
Monmouth-Ocean	Tuesday, April 15th	11:00 AM
Passaic	Tuesday, April 22nd	11:00 AM
Tri-County	Tuesday April 29th	2:00 PM
Union	Friday, April 25th	11:00 AM



## Social Media Sample Posts

### Facebook/Instagram:

We can #HouseNJ by making sure everyone can afford to call New Jersey home. Call Gov. Murphy & your state legislators today & urge them to make sure the final budget invests in our communities by fully funding the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

More millennials are living at home longer in NJ than anywhere else in America.

#HouseNJ by creating more affordable home opportunities. Call Gov. Murphy and your state legislators today and urge them to make sure the final budget includes full funding for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

**Twitter/Bluesky/Threads:**

Thank you #NJLeg members who supported funding the Affordable Housing Trust Fund in last year's budget. Pls support a #FY2026 budget w/ full AHTF funding so we can #HouseNJ.

Tell #GovMurphy & your #NJLeg members to adopt a #NJBudget that expands the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to make #NJ a place everyone can afford to call home. #HouseNJ

New Jersey faces a major housing challenge: 150,000 affordable units needed between 2025 and 2035. Protecting and growing our Affordable Housing Trust Fund is essential to meet this goal and ensure housing security for all NJ residents.

Did you know? 65,410 affordable homes in NJ need renovation or have expiring deed restrictions. We must strengthen the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to preserve these existing units before we lose them forever.

Looking ahead: New Jersey needs 84,698 NEW affordable housing units by 2035 (~150 per municipality). Growing our Affordable Housing Trust Fund is the cornerstone of making this happen. Let's invest in our communities futures! #HouseNJ #GrowAHTF

150,000 affordable homes needed in NJ by 2035. That's why we must fiercely protect and substantially grow our Affordable Housing Trust Fund. It's not just about buildings— it's about creating stable communities where everyone can thrive. #AffordableNJ #InvestInHousing

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**For inquiries, contact us.**

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