



Assembly Budget Committee Testimony in Support of A4175

Good morning, Chairwoman Pintor Marin and members of the Assembly Budget Committee.

The Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey is the statewide association of more than 250 community development corporations, individuals and other organizations that support the creation of affordable homes, economic opportunities, and strong communities. We appreciate the opportunity to testify today in support of this important legislation.

This pandemic has shown us that issues of public health and housing are deeply interconnected. No one can stay home and protect their own health and the health of others if they do not have a safe, affordable place to live. Now more than ever, we need to create a solid foundation for New Jersey renters and homeowners, to make sure they can keep the roof over their heads and stay safe throughout this health crisis. We start by keeping families in their homes, and Gov. Murphy has assured that through executive order 106, which this bill, A4175, addresses when it states that “no lessee, tenant, homeowner or any other person shall be removed from a residential property by foreclosure or eviction... while Executive Order No. 106 is in effect.”

This is a critical starting point, before the pandemic, NJ was one of the most expensive places to rent an apartment. Here, a family needs an annual household income of \$60,000 to afford a two-bedroom, market rate rental. Now, our unemployment rate has surged to 15 percent, up from record lows just the month before. We are grateful you have committed the time and resources to help constituents navigate the unemployment benefits system because so many New Jerseyans are one month away from economic catastrophe. Thousands of New Jerseyans were close to a housing crisis before Coronavirus, so if New Jersey is going to forestall a greater crisis and keep people in their homes during and after the pandemic, then the state’s fiscal house must have the proper tools to provide critical social services for New Jerseyans impacted by the Coronavirus, such as housing counseling and the right to counsel for residents who need assistance.

This is why it is so important that you have restored programs like the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and increased the cap on the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit. These serve as bedrocks during any crisis because they ensure that families can afford to live here and send their children to school here. And during this pandemic and whatever the future brings, these investments provide a strong foundation for communities by keeping residents safe and in their homes. They also mitigate the economic and social strain that results from housing instability. Additionally, because, health and housing are interconnected and interdependent, a lack of

safe, decent, and affordable housing threatens our healthcare infrastructure as lives are placed at risk.

But for all of this to work, we need our government to operate fully and efficiently. At a time when New Jersey and its municipalities have to rethink estimated revenues and appropriations, and when local governments are going to be hard-pressed to operate at existing levels let alone provide additional services, the Network believes this emergency bond act is critical to keeping our state and its residents above water.

Thank you for your time,

Matthew Hersh
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