



Dear Members of the New Jersey State Legislature,

We are writing in support of legislation to create new ways to finance affordable homes in New Jersey. This bill (S1852/A3062) is sponsored in the Senate by Senators Lesniak and Cruz-Perez and in the Assembly by Asm. Singleton, Green and Mukherji.

A common sentiment expressed by many New Jerseyans is that it is just too expensive to live here. We love our state and all the great things it has to offer but it's a struggle to make ends meet. We see it in the number of foreclosure signs throughout our neighborhoods and in the lines at the food pantries. We desperately need more affordable homes in New Jersey.

In order to afford a modest two-bedroom rental in this state, a resident must earn \$25.17 an hour according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's "Out of Reach" report; far more than the state's average hourly wage of \$16.92. This is extremely difficult for residents who are the sole providers in their household, recent college graduates, and seniors living on fixed incomes for example. Also, numerous occupations in New Jersey — social service workers, dental lab technicians, emergency dispatchers, preschool teachers, accounting clerks, child care workers, home health aides, school bus drivers, security guards, janitors, hairstylists, receptionists, cashiers and others — pay less than \$25.17 an hour.

Almost one-third of renters are paying over half of their income for their homes. "Out of Reach" ranks New Jersey as the fifth most expensive place to live in the country. We also lead the nation in foreclosures. We clearly need this bill as it would address the need for more homes people can afford.

Specifically, S1852/A3062 would provide \$600 million in new tax credits for developers to construct affordable, mixed-income housing developments. At least half the apartments would be reserved for very low-, low-, and moderate-income residents. The program would be run by the Housing Mortgage Finance Agency (HMFA). The homes built under this legislation address the variety of housing choices needed for our hardworking families, seniors, and individuals living with special needs.

Our housing market is out of balance. We need more choices especially since the foreclosure crisis and Superstorm Sandy have created a squeeze on the market by forcing homeowners to become renters. Everyone wants a safe, decent, home they can afford. This bill creates an opportunity for our residents.

We urge you to become a cosponsor and support this legislation as it would develop funding opportunities for mixed income homes in neighborhoods across New Jersey.

Sincerely,