

**GOVERNOR'S STATEMENT UPON SIGNING
SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL NO. 281**

Today I am signing Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 281, which requires newly constructed townhouses which have not yet completed a construction permit application within the first day of the seventh month following the bill's enactment, to be installed with an automatic fire sprinkler system. The bill also requires the Department of Community Affairs ("DCA") to adopt rules within the first day of the fifth month following the bill's enactment, to establish standards for the design and construction of townhouses to comply with this requirement.

Automatic fire sprinkler systems are a critical, life-saving component of fire protection, and this bill will make townhouses in our State safer. However, five months is insufficient time for DCA to develop, propose, and respond to public feedback on the rules required for this bill. And adapting to these rules within the timeframe established by the bill would endanger the viability of hundreds of homes, including affordable units in inclusionary developments, anticipated for projects that are far along in the planning process but will not have completed construction applications by August 1.

I am signing this bill today because of the importance of ensuring that the sprinkler requirement is enshrined in our law, and because of a commitment by the bill's prime sponsors that they will immediately introduce and advocate for a bill in the new session that would create a significantly longer grandfathering period. For example, the time for DCA to adopt rules could be extended to within one year following enactment, followed by an additional six-month grace period from adoption of the code changes to when compliance must start. I am hopeful that a longer implementation timeline will ensure that projects already near completion are not unduly disrupted. I look forward to signing this extension as soon as possible.

Date: January 16, 2024

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Parimal Garg

Chief Counsel to the Governor