
Public Hearing

before

ASSEMBLY HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

*“The Committee will receive testimony from invited guests and the public
concerning the affordable housing needs of the state”*

LOCATION: Committee Room 16
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: July 25, 2018
10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman Benjie E. Wimberly, Chair
Assemblywoman Annette Chaparro, Vice Chair
Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson
Assemblywoman Shanique Speight
Assemblyman Jon M. Bramnick
Assemblyman Robert D. Clifton
Assemblywoman Holly T. Schepisi



ALSO PRESENT:

Chris Jewett
Joseph Pezzulo
*Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aides*

Dorian Stanley
Catherine Tung
*Assembly Majority
Committee Aides*

Kristen Onto
*Assembly Republican
Committee Aide*

***Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey***

BENJIE E. WIMBERLY
Chair

ANNETTE CHAPARRO
Vice-Chair

MILA M. JASEY
SHANIQUE SPEIGHT
ROBERT D. CLIFTON
HOLLY T. SCHEPISI



CHRIS JEWETT
JOSEPH PEZZULO
Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aides
(609) 847-3875
(609) 633-1228 fax

New Jersey State Legislature
ASSEMBLY HOUSING AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
STATE HOUSE ANNEX
PO BOX 068
TRENTON NJ 08625-0068

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, July 25, 2018 at 10:00 AM in Committee Room 16, 4th Floor, State House Annex, Trenton, New Jersey.

The public may address comments and questions to Chris Jewett, Joe Pezzulo, Committee Aides, or make bill status and scheduling inquiries to Jaimie Cooper, Secretary, at (609)847-3875, fax (609)633-1228, or e-mail: OLSAideAHO@njleg.org. Written and electronic comments, questions and testimony submitted to the committee by the public, as well as recordings and transcripts, if any, of oral testimony, are government records and will be available to the public upon request.

The committee will receive testimony from invited guests and the public concerning the affordable housing needs of the State.

Those individuals presenting written testimony are asked to provide 15 copies to the committee aides on or prior to the date of the meeting.

Issued 7/13/18

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Sharon Barker Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey	13
Tim Doherty Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer Project Freedom Inc.	16
Assemblywoman Serena DiMaso District 13	23
Michael F. Cerra Assistant Executive Director Government Affairs New Jersey State League of Municipalities	26
Janice S. Mironov Mayor East Windsor Township	26
Michael Ghassali Mayor Borough of Montvale	29
Keith Misciagna Mayor Borough of Park Ridge	31
Albert LiCata Former Mayor Bernards Township	35
Julie Blake Deputy Mayor Township of Hopewell	39
James Burd President Citizens Improving Affordable Housing	39

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Alexander M. Smith Mayor Township of Scotch Plains	40
Michael Viola Committeeman Township Committee Colts Neck Township	42
John R. Hart Member Township Committee Township of Hopewell	48
Paul J. Vallone, M.D. Mayor Borough of Far Hills	50
John Carpenter Mayor Bernards Township	52
Jeff Kolakowski Vice President Government Affairs New Jersey Builders Association	55
Lori Dibble Legislative and Policy Representative Manufactured Home Owners Association of New Jersey, Inc., and Treasurer National Manufactured Home Owners Association	55
Michael Aron Chief Political Correspondent NJTV	56
Thomas F. Troy President Sharbell Development Corporation, and President New Jersey Builders Association	58

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Margot Gray Private Citizen	69
Michael McNeil Chair Housing Committee New Jersey State Conference NAACP, and Executive Director Solutions to End Poverty Soon (STEPS)	71
Kevin D. Walsh, Esq. Executive Director Fair Share Housing Center	75
Gary La Spisa Assistant Vice President Government Affairs New Jersey Apartment Association	87
Karin McGrath Dunn President PRD Management, Inc.	90
Jacob Fisher Regional Vice President Pennrose, LLC	91
Christiana Foglio Founder and Chief Executive Officer Community Investment Strategies Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey	94
Jeffrey R. Surenian, Esq. Private Citizen	96
Jyotika Bahree Member Township Council Township of West Windsor	99

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Carol Bianchi, Esq. Member Township Committee Bernards Township	101
Virginia Manzari Vice President Township Council Township of West Windsor	102
Scott Elliott Director Progressive Center for Independent Living, and Chair New Jersey Association of Centers for Independent Living, Inc.	104
Terrence K. Porter Pastor Pilgrim Baptist Church President Board of Trustees Red Bank Affordable Housing Corporation	106
Connie M. Pascale, Esq. Representing Solutions to End Poverty Soon (STEPS)	109
Nichelle Santos-Sanders Founder and Chief Executive Officer Legacy's Future, LLC	112
Jeffrey Booker Executive Vice President Legacy's Future, LLC	115
Cynthia Lanouette Representing Destiny's Bridge	117
Minister Steven Brigham Representing Destiny's Bridge	118

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Kristin McLaughlin Member Township Committee Township of Hopewell	122
Robert E. McNulty, Sr. Representing Veterans Executive Legislative Action Council	125
Zachary Bregman Representing Central Jersey Democratic Socialists of America	129
Dierdre Glenn Paul, Ph.D. Private Citizen	131
Mark McCarthy Private Citizen	133
Linda Geevers Member Town Council Township of West Windsor	136
Carinne Murphy Private Citizen	139
APPENDIX:	
Testimony submitted by Sharon Barker	1x
Testimony submitted by Tim Doherty	4x
Testimony, plus attachments submitted by Michael F. Cerra	7x

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

APPENDIX (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Testimony submitted by Alexander M. Smith	40x
Testimony, plus attachments submitted by Lori Dibble	44x
Testimony submitted by Gary La Spisa	52x
Testimony submitted by Karin McGrath Dunn	54x
Testimony submitted by Jacob Fisher	56x
Testimony submitted by Christiana Foglio	58x
Testimony submitted by Carol Bianchi, Esq.	63x
Testimony submitted by Virginia Manzari	64x
Testimony submitted by Scott Elliott	65x

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

APPENDIX (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Testimony, plus <i>The Uncomfortable Truth: Racism, Injustice, and Poverty in New Jersey</i> submitted by Connie M. Pascale, Esq.	66x
Testimony submitted by Kristin McLaughlin	74x
Testimony submitted by Robert E. McNulty, Sr.	76x
Testimony submitted by Dierdre Glenn Paul, Ph.D.	79x
Testimony submitted by Matthew B. Shapiro President New Jersey Tenants Organization	81x
pnf:1-145	

ASSEMBLYMAN BENJIE E. WIMBERLY (Chair): Good morning.

At this time, I'm going to ask everybody to stand for the flag salute. (all recite the Pledge of Allegiance)

Good morning.

I see it's July 25, I believe; and we have a full house. So we're glad to have everybody out this morning.

Some people asked -- I have my summer relaxation look. I don't have to shave until September, I told my family. (laughter) But I thought about it, and then changed my mind.

But good morning. We've invited all of you here today to start a much needed discussion on affordable housing in New Jersey, an issue that has not been addressed, in this type of forum, in over two years.

Today we will be hearing testimony from invited guests, as well as the public.

It is no secret that the cost of living in New Jersey is among the highest in the nation. And currently we are in an all-time high, in terms of demand for affordable housing. We face a shortage of affordable homes in our state. This concerns us as a legislative body and Committee.

There are entirely too many residents of New Jersey who are struggling to make ends meet and are simply unable to add the stress of unreasonable rents, taxes, or mortgages onto their plates.

Almost 40 years ago, New Jersey became the first state in the country to no longer allow land developers and municipalities to discriminate against the poor when building new housing. Unfortunately,

with the shortage of affordable homes and little action towards improvement, we are now staring further away from the principle.

While all that is being said, while it will take some time, we have taken a significant step today by opening a forum to hear the concerns from those affected, as well as those trying to help.

When it comes to housing affordability in the state, we should have three priorities: revitalizing, preserving, and creating housing opportunities for low- to middle-income families. Our State budget for Fiscal Year 2019 reallocates \$15 million to the Fair Housing Trust Fund in order to create more affordable housing opportunities. These funds will help us to begin to address our residents' affordable housing needs.

There are so many abandoned buildings, and ample land, and other cost-efficient resources that can and should be taken advantage of. We see plenty of those opportunities in cities like Paterson, in my District; and right here in the City of Trenton. Over 100 towns have recently started taking more initiative in creating opportunities for affordable housing in their communities on their own accord. Their motivation is a good thing; it shows that many of our cities are thinking of innovative ways to provide for their residents and stem the housing crisis in our communities.

This issue affects all demographics in our state. Millennials are living with their parents after graduating from college longer than ever before. Buying their first home is almost unattainable for newly married couples looking to start a family. Children aged-out of the foster care system do not have the means to afford a place to live on their own.

Veterans -- the men and women who have served our country -- are living on fixed incomes that leaves little room for the rising cost of rent.

Simply put, the more affordable housing opportunities we're able to create, the more we can do to put an end to homelessness in New Jersey. By putting affordable housing in high-opportunity places, we also enable job creation. Each of these groups I mentioned would benefit from living in a place that provides access to a job and affordable housing.

We have to do this sooner, rather than later, to ensure that we are giving the opportunities to our residents that will improve their quality of life.

Today, we are talking about affordable housing. We realize there are numerous issues to tackle when it comes to housing and community development in our state. There's mold and lead safety, reentry concerns, landlord mandates, and the broader topic of affordable housing -- COAH requirements. These are all among the top priorities, and we look forward to holding as many hearings as possible throughout the state this year to begin to solve the major housing and community development problems.

Thank you all for being here; and at this point, I do want to take a moment of silence for the late Assemblyman Jerry Green. As you know, he took ill; and during that time, unfortunately, the Housing and Community Development Committee was somewhat dormant.

But if we can please take a moment of silence for Assemblyman Jerry Green.

(moment of silence observed)

Thank you very much.

And on a personal note, I will say I am a product of public housing. I have been a renter; I have been a homeowner; I have been somebody who has rented out properties. So I have seen all gamuts of it, when it comes to when homeownership -- to trying to buy your first home, to leaving public housing, to a community that is just in the process of demolishing our last public housing unit in the City of Paterson. So this is something that I feel very comfortable about.

And I also know that the impact of housing throughout the State of New Jersey and the nation, will have a major impact on the health of many of our residents, the educational opportunities of many of our residents; and of course, we talk about job creation. Many of us, as our -- my colleagues will talk about the impact that affordable housing will have on particular communities throughout the State of New Jersey. I know, in many of our urban centers, we already experience many issues when it comes to housing, when it comes to the infrastructure of our cities. Because not only do we deal with housing, we deal with many properties in our community that are non-taxable because we are the county seat; because we are the city or community that holds many of the social service programs that are housed throughout the State of New Jersey.

So at this time, I'm going to ask for a roll call; and I'm going to give my colleagues an opportunity to make a statement.

Before we get started, each of the people who are testifying today -- we're going to hold strictly to the three-minute rule. I will not be disrespectful; but when you hear the gavel, I will ask you to wrap it up.

Thank you very much.

Roll call.

MR. JEWETT (Committee Aide): Assemblyman Clifton.

ASSEMBLYMAN CLIFTON: Here.

MR. JEWETT: Assemblywoman Schepisi.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Here.

MR. JEWETT: We're also joined by Minority Leader Bramnick.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Present.

MR. JEWETT: Assemblywoman Chaparro.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANNETTE CHAPARRO (Vice Chair): Here.

MR. JEWETT: Assemblywoman Reynolds-Jackson.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Here.

MR. JEWETT: And Chairman Wimberly.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Here.

At this time, we do have with us Assembly Minority Leader Bramnick.

I'm going to give you the opportunity to open up with a statement at this time.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Thank you, Chairman.

And before I begin, let me introduce Assemblywoman Munoz; Assemblywoman DiMaso is here also, sitting to my left. And I appreciate their attendance as well.

First, let me say a few words about the former Chairman, Jerry Green; a close friend from Plainfield for over 40 years. I miss him dearly, and I think the moment of silence was very appropriate.

Thank you.

Also, I also appreciate sitting today on your Committee; and I appreciate the Speaker allowing me to sit.

Let me start -- that the Chairman's words were clear. I appreciate the need for affordable housing. And you could hear the passion from this Chairman, and how he felt about the need for affordable housing. I think most people in this state agree with the Chairman that affordable housing is extremely important.

But what we've had for almost three or four decades is confusion because of court-imposed decisions that have made it extremely difficult for mayors and for local boards to actually decide how to handle these issues. It is time for the Legislature today to start to set the rules for affordable housing. Now, we may disagree on what those rules should be. I believe that local planning boards, local zoning boards, and local mayors should make the decision on housing needs in a community; and here's why. Only local officials really understand the impact on schools, on property taxes, on traffic, on congestion. With all due respect to my friends in the courts, they are not in a position to determine how many units should go into a town.

So what I am hoping is that the Legislature addresses this issue quickly and defers to local officials. Now, this I believe is a bipartisan issue. In the communities that I represent, on a bipartisan basis, people seriously want to control the housing needs in their community. So today is a beginning, and I am hoping this Legislature will take quick action to address this need for affordable housing with respect to local home rule.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Schepisi.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: First off, I'd like to thank you for having this meeting. It's a huge step forward, and it's something that, over the past several years, nobody seemed to have the appetite to do -- to at least have the discussion. And for that, I really am incredibly grateful for you hosting this meeting today.

It is an incredibly difficulty topic, with no easy solutions. I see a lot of mayors and different people in the audience whose communities I've gone to, all throughout the state, to hear their concerns; to talk about better ways to do what we are doing.

Across the board, every person I have spoken to is not against affordable housing. People want to find a better way to provide it within their communities.

The concern is high-density housing that's going along with it, changing entire communities where you have small communities that are being forced to put in 2,000 unit complexes, right now, without any regard for infrastructure and a whole host of things.

I got involved with this issue before I was ever involved in politics. I've seen it from multiple sides. I was a borough attorney in a community that felt a moral obligation to affirmatively provide affordable housing for people in the community. It did everything it was supposed to do, and still got sued in a builder remedy suit after being one of the only communities to receive substantive certification from COAH.

I saw what happened after COAH got disbanded, and how it became kind of the Wild West, and nobody knew what to do with it.

I am outside counsel for the Bergen County Housing Authority, and I work in conjunction with Monarch Housing in trying to build 100 percent affordable housing projects. And I see how difficult the layers of bureaucracy have made it to build some of these projects, even when you have incredible teams of people working in conjunction with one another to do so.

I've seen how we're failing our residents who have transitional needs -- people whose homes are in foreclosure. We have over 40,000 foreclosed homes in the state sitting vacant and empty. We have people who can't get housing vouchers, who have been on lists for years. And I've also seen that we're trying to do a cookie-cutter approach throughout the state that doesn't make any sense. We have inner city areas that have had phenomenal booms of high-end luxury building that haven't built one unit of affordable housing or renovated affordable housing for their community.

So it's something whereby I'm hoping that with the testimony, with the people in this room, we can all work together, in a bipartisan way, to try to come up with a better means of moving forward.

I've identified about six different classes of people who are seeking affordable housing in the state. And what we're doing right now isn't working for a lot of these groups.

You have generational poverty, inner city -- people who want to see revitalization of their own communities, which isn't happening. You have our seniors who are leaving the state in droves, because even though their homes are paid off, their property taxes are so high that they can't stay in their communities. You have our special needs; we have the highest rate of autism in the entire country. You have families who are on waiting lists

who can't get their family members into housing and parents aging out who are taking care of 50-, 60-year-old special needs children.

You have our millennials who don't want to live in the middle of nowhere, where there's no night life, no public transportation, and no jobs; but we're building housing for them in areas which makes absolutely no sense. You have our working poor -- which constitutes almost everybody in the state -- people who are working two full-time jobs; but because of property taxes now being higher than their mortgage payments are just barely hanging on to their homes.

And then you have people who have transitional needs -- the people who, because of a divorce, a medical issue, loss of job -- need temporary help from their community, and their communities aren't permitted to grant them any sort of relief under our current rules.

So, once again, I'm thankful for you hosting this. I'm hoping that we can actually start to talk about some legislative solutions as we move forward on this.

And I thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

At this time, I apologize.

Vice Chair Chaparro.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHAPARRO: I'll be brief, because I know there are a lot of people who want to speak.

I am very grateful that we are having this meeting; it's very important. I think that there are a lot of issues and a lot of things that are going to be brought up.

I live in Hoboken; so if anyone knows Hoboken, it's one of the prime cities that made a total turnaround. It's right on the waterfront, so it was affordable at one time. We all know it's not so affordable now.

There are many elements to affordable housing, and I do agree that local officials know their town best. But I do also believe that we need strict guidelines; really strict guidelines. Because, as you know, whoever's in office can turn that city upside down, make it a turnaround; many things can take place.

And it's really important -- of course, each town knows what they want; voters know -- when they elect their officials, and what they want them to do. But it's extremely important that we both work together; that we come up with solutions that are attainable, not just some, like you said, cookie-cutter things. No one wants to-- One of the reasons why Hoboken became very popular is because we're right across from Manhattan. So of course, no one is going to want to live somewhere out in the country, just because it's affordable housing, if they can't get to work. So we understand that too.

But we do want to make sure that people who are suffering, who need housing, who need a roof over their heads are not forgotten. And it may not work for a town -- maybe there is a solution where we can come together. And it's really important that we do address it together, because that's the only way it's going to work.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Assemblywoman Verlina Jackson.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: I, too, want to thank the Speaker and Chairman for allowing me to participate in this affordable housing hearing today.

I come from a district -- especially from the City of Trenton -- where we have lots of affordable housing. I also represent other districts that have done their fair share in affordable housing. But we have others that want to make this more about *us versus them*, and don't want to have the inclusion.

But one of my favorite quotes is, "Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance." And this quote is from Verna Myers. I think we have to do that, as a State Legislature, to make sure that we can live wherever we want to live, and it should be affordable for everyone.

And so, again, I appreciate the opportunity to be able to serve, and hear your issues and concerns today.

Thank you so much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Assemblyman Clifton.

ASSEMBLYMAN CLIFTON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman; and thank you again for holding this.

I've had the honor and privilege of serving on this Committee since 2012, and serving with the late Jerry Green as Chairman during that time. And I knew his passion for this; as well, as I think-- which is an equal component to the affordable housing issue -- and that's urban development. And that is one of the things Jerry really strived for.

And I think the rules and the things that can come out here today are only going to help those in the most need for affordable housing,

as well as to be able to help strengthen and rebuild our urban centers as well.

You know, we need a flexible plan that will provide the much needed housing that is appropriate in the diverse communities that we all represent. I represent a very unique district; my hometown of Matawan is a small, suburban, sort of bedroom community. But it is perfect for affordable housing. It is on a major rail and bus lines; it has a downtown; it's close to hospitals, it's close to other services; and it has city services, such as water and sewer.

And then I represent a community, like Upper Freehold Township, that has large acreage in their zoning; there is no city water; no city sewer; not near anything, as far as services, transportation, things of that nature.

So as we work together, and we go around the state and we're going to hear from other mayors, and we're going to hear from mayors today, we have to come up with a plan that allows the flexibilities of these communities to put in the appropriate type of housing, the affordable housing, and not cripple these towns with huge infrastructure improvement needs that will have to come along with some of this housing.

So I appreciate the opportunity to be here, and your leadership on this; and I look forward to the testimony today.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

At this time, we're going to begin testimony.

As stated earlier, we will stick to three minutes. There will not be an opportunity to yield your time to anybody. We have a large, large

stack of folks who are going to testify today, so please be respectful to the time.

At this time, we're going to bring up Sharon Barker, from the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey.

We're also going to ask Ben Haygood and Tim Doherty to come forward at this time. So you guys can get set for your testimony.

Tim Doherty, you can hold off; I'm sorry.

S H A R O N B A R K E R: He can come sit next to me.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: You can sit down next to her; that's fine.

MS. BARKER: Come on; sit next to me, Tim. (laughter)

Just to clarify, Staci Berger was on the list for today; Arnold Cohen was on the list for today. And both of them are in Washington D.C., and I'm here in their place.

So does that mean I get six minutes? (laughter)

So do I get the six minutes?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: You get three minutes, still; I'm sorry. (laughter)

Tell those guys I said hello; and they made me aware that they would be in D.C. on housing issues, so I understand.

MS. BARKER: Okay; I just wanted to make sure -- they wanted to make sure that you knew they would've been here if they weren't down, with over 300 people today, in D.C.

So I'm Sharon Barker, and I'm the Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at the Housing and Community Development Network

of New Jersey. It's a long name; we refer to ourselves as *The Network*. It makes it a lot easier.

And I was very heartened to hear your comments this morning. It was wonderful to hear everybody's in favor of affordable homes. And when you think about an affordable home, it means that each of us has a home we can afford. So if you have less income, you need a less expensive home.

New Jersey does not do enough for the needs that we have in this state. And if you look behind me, and in Room 15, and I think down the hall as well, we have a lot of people here today to say that they are all in need of homes.

I gave you my testimony; and I'm not going to read from it, because three minutes is not a lot of time. And I know all of you know how to read.

But there's an important piece here. I, personally, am looking for an affordable home right now. My husband retired, so our income was cut in half. And I'm going to end up driving an hour from where I can find an affordable home to my office here in Trenton because of that.

So as we're looking at retirement, that's a big issue as well. We don't want to lose people in New Jersey; we want to be able to keep them. And so if we can work together to find a way to make that happen, it's important.

Now I heard that we want people to be able to make decisions in their local communities, and that's a great part of it. In my early career, that's exactly what I was doing -- was working with the individual communities when I worked for a consulting firm on housing, back in the

1980s and 1990s, when Mount Laurel was all taking place. And that's great, and a community should be making plans. But there has to be regulations and laws that require that certain things are taken care of; certain things are met. We have to make sure that we are not facing segregation. And unfortunately, that's what happens in some communities; and I would never say it was happening in any of your communities that are here in this room. But that's what happens, and we know that.

And we also know that you end up pushing people into a community that might be further away from where they work -- like me. I'm going an hour away; I'll be driving two hours every day that, right now, I don't have to do that. But because of our cut in income, it does make a big difference.

New Jersey is No. 6 as the least (*sic*) expensive state in the country to afford to live. And that's from the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and the details are in the packets that I gave out. We are No. 6; who are we behind? Hawaii, California, Massachusetts, Washington D.C.; I mean, why are we up there at No. 6? We've been there for over 20 years, at the top of that list. We want to be No. 1 in a lot of things; but not in those negative things. And we are No. 1 in foreclosure, and we stay there.

The Network -- and I, in particular, head up a grant. We are the largest funded housing counseling intermediary in the State of New Jersey. We receive more money and work with more agencies that do housing counseling to help people to be prepared to buy their first home, to put a budget together to determine whether they should have a home or they should be a renter, to be able to prevent foreclosure--

(timer rings)

Now I get three more. (laughter)

--to be able to prevent foreclosure. And we do that every single day. We're here; our office is across the street.

I know I'm at my last minute, so I'll close it up.

Our office is across the street. We are happy to work with you to help you find a solution. We see all sides of it. I've worked on both sides of it, and I'm in it right now. And I'm also one of those -- my son came home; you know, one of those millennials who came home and slept in my house for another two years because he couldn't afford to live on his own.

So I've lived it all sides: I've been homeowner, a renter, and now I'm trying to be a homeowner again; and I have been a landlord at one point. So I do see all sides; and I'm originally from Union County.

So please use us; that's what we're here for. And we want to help settle this.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

MS. BARKER: And again, thank you for the moment of silence for Jerry Green. He had a big impact on many of our lives. I appreciate it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And we appreciate all you do.

Thank you very much.

MS. BARKER: Thank you.

T I M D O H E R T Y: I think I have an apartment for you too, by the way.

MS. BARKER: Oh; I need a house. (laughter)

MR. DOHERTY: Good morning.

My name is Tim Doherty, and I want to thank the Committee for allowing me to come and give some testimony here today.

I do have prepared remarks, so I would like to stay with my script here.

For the past 20 years I have served as the Executive Director for Project Freedom. Project Freedom is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit developer of affordable, barrier-free rental apartments for persons with special needs, as well as non-disabled families.

Established in 1984, Project Freedom has grown from one, 30-unit apartment complex, to 7 housing communities; over 423 units across the State of New Jersey. In addition, we currently have two projects under construction -- one in West Windsor and one in Gibbsboro -- and two more in planning stages, for another 288 units.

All our rental units are barrier-free, so that someone who uses a wheelchair can maneuver his or her apartment without difficulty. We not only develop our housing, we also operate and maintain our units; as well as provide support staff for those who reside at our sites.

So our supported housing and barrier-free housing is also part of the affordable housing industry, since all of our consumers are low-income citizens. This is something that is not always realized.

Over the last few years, as we have grown and opened up new communities, I am always amazed at the number of people who make applications for our housing. For example, when we completed our Toms River site, we had a wait list of over 700 applications. Likewise, our Westampton community has a wait list of over 500 families. In order to

fairly rent up these units, we hold a lottery, usually in the town hall of the community we are building in, which takes all day.

The response to our housing communities is overwhelming, and our communities continue to hold waiting lists for future tenants. To say that there is enough affordable housing in New Jersey is just fake news.

The need is so great, there isn't a week that goes by that each of our housing communities don't receive new tenant applications. Even more critical is the need for barrier-free or accessible housing for persons who use a wheelchair.

Another hat that I have worn, since 2008, has been as a member of COAH. Yes, that hated agency that tried to provide affordable housing in New Jersey. I believe that I am still the last man standing on that agency, other than the mandated State officers.

And while the functions of COAH no longer operate, Rounds 1 and 2 did run relatively well, and did produce certifications for over half of New Jersey communities. Over 60,000 units of housing were created, providing much needed relief for many lower income families.

Since the establishment of COAH, there had always been two options a town could take.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mr. Doherty, if could kind of wrap it up at this point.

MR. DOHERTY: Surely.

There are several bills pending, all of which will have an impact on the effectiveness of our ability, as a nonprofit, to do our housing. They come regarding prevailing, regarding long-term tax abatement. Those issues will impact a nonprofit that develops housing -- in our financing.

The bills that are being proposed today are evidence of, still, a contentious environment that we live in with regarding affordable housing.

I know--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: At this time--

MR. DOHERTY: Yes?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --if you could wrap up.

Do any of our legislators have any questions for Mr. Doherty?

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: I sure do.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes; Assemblyman Bramnick.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DOHERTY: I wasn't finished, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: With all due respect, if I let everybody go over 30 seconds, 30 seconds equal an hour.

MR. DOHERTY: Okay; fine.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So at this time, I'm going to give our legislators a chance to ask any questions.

Minority Leader.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: First, Chairman, I respect the fact that there is limited time; and I have to tell you I think it's important, because there are a lot of people who want to speak, and I think the point is made.

But if I could make a suggestion to people who are speaking.

There's a consensus that we need affordable housing; there's a consensus that it's a real need. The solution that this Legislature is looking for is how we do that with -- understanding the impact on infrastructure in communities. Right now, the courts are in charge. So I would just ask all

of the people to address, or help us address, that issue. Because clearly, there's been no debate as to whether affordable housing is needed. The question becomes -- the way it's imposed by the courts now with a number. If you support that, that's fine. It just seems to me that it is this body, this Legislature that needs to address it, and not the courts. So I think it would be helpful if solutions were provided by those who spoke.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Minority Leader, I totally agree.

And my office is open to any legislative recommendations that you have.

And at this time, though, we're going to still stick to the three minutes. And like I said--

MR. DOHERTY: Just one comment.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mr. Doherty, one second.

MR. DOHERTY: All right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: At this time, just for the future speakers, if you do not want to read from script, we will have your written script. If you could really summarize what you have to say, and then, in writing, you can e-mail any legislative concerns or recommendations to my office, or to your local legislator. I think that's fair to everybody because I know, you know, we have a lot of people. We have an overflow room of people waiting to testify. So there are stacks of people ready to go. I'm sure some of this stuff is going to be said again.

But Mr. Doherty, at this time, I'm going to give you 10 seconds to wrap it up.

MR. DOHERTY: Okay.

I mean, with all due respect, Mr. Bramnick, you know, we've had, since 1985, the law was passed. We've had 15 years and 18 -- 33 years of dealing with affordable housing in the State of New Jersey, and here is where we are. We're at a stage where the courts are finally settling the issue, one at a time, with all of the towns. They are finding solutions, whether we all like them or not, whether they are the best or not.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mr. Doherty, like I said, with all due respect, we're going to wrap it up at that point.

MR. DOHERTY: Very well.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And I'm sure all of us are open to meeting with you at your convenience, most of us throughout the summer. But I welcome you any time to contact my office; and I'm sure everybody else is open to meeting with you, either a sidebar today -- we could step out of the room -- or at our convenience we could schedule a meeting.

MR. DOHERTY: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes; Assemblywoman Schepisi.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Real quick.

One for Ms. Barker. You yourself just said you want a *house*; you don't want a *unit*. In the sampling of settlement agreements from 39 towns, there are 29,000 new units going in, most of which are market rate, but they're all rentals. So as we're looking for solutions, and you're sitting here yourself as somebody who's in the thick of it saying, "I don't want one of those rental units; I want a house," how do you, kind of, reconcile that?

MS. BARKER: Thank you.

I'm in a rental unit now, and I have been for several years.

I have no problem with a rental, other than my husband can't go up and down stairs because of a handicap. So we are looking for a one-floor, which is why I'm looking for a small house.

But that's a perfect example of -- everyone has different needs. And as I said before, we're not looking for units; we're looking for homes. And everyone's home is a little different, and you afford, and you look for the specifications you need for your situation.

My husband, at times, can't walk very well. And so I need something that's flat.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Okay; and tied into that -- because that goes directly into Mr. Doherty's comments -- you know, do you support arbitrary caps right now on the percentage of affordable special needs and senior housing that we have at the State level, which disincentivize communities--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Assemblywoman, I'm going to ask you to-- We can't go back and forth at this point.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We could do sidebars; because if not, we will be talking to every person who comes up here.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So we are going to-- If you could step outside, I'd appreciate that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Okay; all right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you guys for your testimony.

MS. BARKER: Thank you, Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: At this time, we're going to give leeway to one of our Assembly members; Assemblywoman DiMaso, come forward.

A S S E M B L Y W O M A N S E R E N A D i M A S O: (off mike)
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just briefly, because--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: No, Assemblywoman, you could testify for us.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DiMASO: Okay; no problem.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be brief.

As to the Leader's comments -- there is no doubt that we all agree that there is a need for affordable housing.

And I want to thank you very much for holding this hearing today, because I think it gives townships an opportunity to have a little bit of hope -- hold a little bit of hope out there, that the numbers that are coming down from the Fair Share Housing aren't going to be imposed on them.

Some of the numbers -- and I'm sure you all have charts from your District; I have charts from my District -- in some cases, it's 10 times the number -- the COAH numbers have put out. And that is a difficult task for many of my towns.

For instance, Union Beach has 1,200 kids now; but if they were to build -- according to these numbers, if you just average out two kids a

household, they would have to build enough school buildings for 2,600 additional students.

So there are a lot of factors that have to be taken into account that I truly appreciate that this board and this body is undertaking. Similar to Assemblyman Clifton's point -- there are townships, like my own, like Rumson, that do not have a center of a town; do not have public transportation available to them. Yet they have 3,000 and 2,400 units, respectively, that they would have to build.

So I'm asking that perhaps one of the solutions we can come up with is -- there are recertification needs for rentals, but there aren't those same needs for when you purchase a home. So we find that -- in my District, anyway -- there are lots of people who stay in that home and-- It's supposed to be a hand up, not a hand out. So if there's a way we can maybe work, and look at those numbers, and see who could actually, now, move on and allow for a new family, or a new college student, or nurse, or teacher that these homes are supposed to be for. If they can move forward, and have them move on to a house, they-- People who got there first -- to what they could live in; and then make room for the next group of people to come in. I think that would be very helpful.

And I just think that we need to find-- To Assemblywoman Schepisi's comment about, it kind of became the Wild, Wild West -- if you look at the numbers between COAH and Fair Share Housing; and Fair Share Housing, in their lawsuits, is now giving 30 percent discounts. If they can afford to give a 30 percent discount, do they truly believe that that's the number that that township needs to build?

So I would just ask you to consider all those points in going forward and creating legislation. And I look forward to working with each of you to create something that's going to-- To your point, Assemblywoman Chaparro, we need to have strict rules; we need to have something that everybody follows, and not just some towns and other towns. My town has been compliant up until this point; other towns have zero compliance.

So, you know, if we can get that done, I'd appreciate it.

So thank you very much for your time, and for allowing me--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Assemblywoman, thank you. Your points are well taken.

And like I said, I think this is an issue that I see across the board -- in particular, I'm going to be talking to Assemblywoman Schepisi -- it's not a Republican or a Democratic issue--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DiMASO: No, it's not.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --because it's going to impact everybody.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DiMASO: It is.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I mean, New Jersey is so densely populated, in particular these areas, that, you know, through the schools, through the infrastructure, through public safety -- it's going to have an impact on everybody.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DiMASO: And impervious coverage. These environmental groups--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes. So this is something I think that we're all going to drop our titles, and--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DiMASO: It's a human issue.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --it's a human issue; yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DiMASO: Thank you very much, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you for your time today.

At this time, we're going to bring up Michael Cerra, from the New Jersey League of Municipalities.

And Mr. Cerra, I know you have a group of mayors; if I miss somebody, you can invite them up in groups of, I guess--

Mr. Cerra, go ahead; and then, at that point, the mayors -- you can start getting ready. We'll bring you up in groups of three.

M I C H A E L F. C E R R A: Thank you, Mr. Chairman; good morning to the members of the Committee.

Mike Cerra, on behalf of the State League of Municipalities.

I'm joined by Mayor Janice Mironov of East Windsor. The Mayor is a past president of the League, Chair of the League's Housing Committee; and is currently a Vice President of the New Jersey Conference of Mayors.

I submitted some testimony -- a statement and additional materials to the Committee. Personally, I'll defer to that; and will defer to the Mayor for the rest of the testimony, in the interest of time.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mayor, thank you.

M A Y O R J A N I C E S. M I R O N O V: Okay; Chairman Wimberly and Committee.

Thank you very much, Minority Leader Bramnick; and I also want to do a shout-out to Assemblywoman Schepisi, who has been consistent in pushing this issue forward in various forms.

And thank you, Chairman, very much, for today's hearing. This is really an important opening to a very important subject in our state. And it is an opportunity to move the issue of affordable housing to the Legislature and to the Administration, where it belongs.

So let me just give my *bona fides* quickly, so everyone in the room hears.

I am the Mayor of East Windsor Township, in Mercer County. We have always had a very inclusionary community, in terms of the nature of our housing and our population. We are certified Round 1; we are certified Round 2; and we have entered into a settlement for our existing housing in which we are moving along in good faith with our partners in that settlement.

So I am here in that context, and I am here to talk on behalf of the League of Municipalities and to make several points. Three minutes is not an opportunity to get into many specifics or weeds. But rest assured we have lots of ideas; we have lots of specific proposals.

What we would like to see, at this point, is to see this moved into the Legislature and the Administration.

Let me give you an example, with respect to the courts right now, where there is unevenness, uncertainty; and I'll speak for my town.

As we have moved forward, we have a representative of one of the projects that has become a little more animated lately. We have moved along in good faith; everyone concurs.

I have been compelled to spend thousands and thousands of dollars in order to handle this so we can all to continue to move forward. That is ridiculous; it makes no sense, because people are using the masters and the court process to evade sitting down with towns and doing what they are supposed to be doing -- which is planning with the towns and creating the affordable housing units in a good, fair manner. So that is an issue.

So some of our general goals, if I might. We all agree on the goals, and I am pleased to hear that -- not surprisingly -- and we do at the League as well.

But we want to see a certain, a reasonable, and a rational housing policy for our State which takes into account good planning. So we have transportation, job generation, environmental issues that need to be considered.

Funding -- so we need to make sure that we are funding these units in a way that is fair to all of our taxpayers. One of the issues we want to see raised is off-track improvements. So how are we all paying for those? That's certainly one of the issues -- impediments.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mayor, I'm going to ask you to wrap it up.

MAYOR MIRONOV: So this will provide an opportunity for more credit, and control, and tools, creatively, to incentivize these different subjects that we've been talking about this morning, where we identify what our needs are.

So we look forward to working with all of you. We're here as a resource; we're here as a partner with everybody in this room, and with all of you in the Committee.

And we thank you for this opportunity.

And three minutes really went quickly. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you very much.

I just want to remind some of the people who are standing that we do have an overflow room where you can hear the testimony -- in Room 15. So if you'd like to stand there and then come back, we will wait for you to come back, as far as your testimony. If you like to stand, stand; but we do have ample space in Room 15.

At this time, we're going to bring up three more mayors at a time, Mr. Cerra, if that's good for you? All right.

Mayor Mike Ghassali; former Mayor Albert LiCata; and the Mayor of Park Ridge, Keith Misciagna.

If I butchered any names, please repeat them as you come forward.

And as I said, please reintroduce yourself. And I apologize if I have not done justice to your name.

We're going to start here (indicates).

MAYOR MICHAEL GHASSALI: Good morning.

My name is Mike Ghassali; I'm the Mayor of the Borough of Montvale in Bergen County.

Montvale is a four-square-mile town with seven traffic lights, at the last exit of the Parkway; that's how we're known.

We had the headquarters of Mercedes Benz, that moved to Georgia; A&P that went out of business; and Sony that moved out. We had 100 prime acres. Our Fair Share Housing agreement has been signed, and we have the obligation to build 550 affordable housing units.

With the full build-out, our housing stock will double the size of our town.

I'm not here to complain, I'm not here to wave the white flag. I'm here, Mr. Chairman, to offer compromises and, perhaps, a solution.

It's no secret that we have towns in the state that have low high school graduation rates, and high crime rates and unemployment rates. And there are towns in this state that are really good at keeping crime low, lower unemployment rate, and a higher standard school system. So rather than doubling the size of some of the towns in the state, like Montvale, and moving families around from different parts of the state to accommodate the Affordable Housing Act, we can work to help these towns in need of help and keep families where they are -- close to their communities, houses of worship, friends, and schools. We can work together to invest in these communities to bring jobs, to better the school system, and to bring the professionals, from statewide, to make the town safer for their residents. We can do that.

And I believe that many of my fellow Mayors will sign on, and perhaps create a committee to work for you and really make a difference. We can do this; it will stimulate the economy, and keep jobs in New Jersey, and build the state's image. There is no reason for a high school in New Jersey to have a 40 percent and 50 percent graduation rate; no reason to

have a 50 percent unemployment rate. We have the expertise and the talent to fix all this.

I thank you for the opportunity, and I look forward to working with you to make a difference.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mayor, thank you.

And like I said, we're open to all suggestions. But I'm sure there are going to be opposite testimony today of what you just said. I think that a zip code should not really dictate how somebody's education is, or what their safety is.

So I may not agree with you totally; but I'm willing to listen to whatever solutions that we come together, as a whole, to fix this issue that we're facing about housing in New Jersey.

Thank you very much.

MAYOR GHASSALI: I appreciate that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mayor.

MAYOR KEITH MISCIAGNA: Hi.

I'm Keith Misciagna from Park Ridge; the Mayor of Park Ridge.

I'm not as prepared as Mike, but I did want to come here and ask you for your help, and explain our situation in Park Ridge.

I know this is a bipartisan issue. If it helps, I'm a Democrat; and if that helps people listen to me -- we're dealing with some issues in Park Ridge that I think when you hear our story you might be sympathetic.

We need affordable housing; I'm in favor of affordable housing. But we also need jobs, because if we don't have jobs, we're going to need a heck of a lot more affordable housing. And unfortunately, in Bergen

County, we are victims of a number of corporations leaving for other states, due to a number of reasons. Park Ridge lost two major corporate residents, Sony and Hertz, that moved to the southern states for tax purposes.

We feel that there's still a market for businesses to move into our community. And we certainly feel that a good community, a good viable community has businesses as part of their residents so people can work in the area and such.

So we are trying to get corporations to move into those houses. The problem is, the real estate is worth so much that developers are coming in and they're using the metaphorical gun to our head. I could give you a personal story. A developer came in with one of those projects, and they asked for a density that's much more than we're comfortable with, which would impact our town. Park Ridge has 9,000 residents; 3,500 doors. They wanted -- they said, "Give us, roughly, 1,000 units. And if you don't, we're going to go to a judge and ask for 2,000; and we're going to build affordable." That's not what this affordable process was meant to do. It's not meant to hold a gun to our heads.

I'm in favor of it. Park Ridge has put a 20 percent requirement, for many years, for multiple family homes. We were moving in the right direction; but because of the fleeing of corporations, we now are in this unenviable situation.

And I tell my other area mayors that it's a crime coming to you, because as soon as a company goes out of business-- We're not talking about businesses that have been sitting dormant for years, and years, and years, and tumbleweeds are blowing through them. These are businesses

that we can make happen. And that's important to New Jersey; it's important to Park Ridge.

You know, the Assemblyman was asking for solutions; and the first thing that came to mind was, "I didn't create this problem; I expect people at this table to come up with the solutions." We are living with this.

And I think, in theory, affordable housing is necessary, and it's welcome in our community. We like a diverse community. We have a somewhat-- It's a blue-collar community; we're surrounded by more affluent towns, but Park Ridge is a blue-collar town, mostly built-out. We have two little pockets; and now we have this situation.

We have spent over \$500,000 trying to defend ourselves for something that I'm not opposed to. And I have to go to my residents and explain to them-- My residents want us to get a reasonable development that we can all live with. We have our own high school; we have our own utilities. We have a very difficult situation-- to have a thousand units come into a community that has only 3,000, 3,500 doors is not what this was designed to do.

So I am really asking you for your help. You know--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mayor--

MAYOR MISCIAGNA: That could not have been three minutes, could it? (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: No; Mayor, you're fine.

I can relate; and like I said, I know my colleagues from Camden, and Trenton, and Paterson -- you're talking about great escapes of businesses. I think that's what I faced in my lifetime.

MAYOR MISCIAGNA: Yes; and I--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We were once the silk manufacturing city of the nation. And now, all of those buildings are abandoned, and so are those jobs. So I can relate.

MAYOR MISCIAGNA: Good blue-collar jobs.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes; blue-collar jobs. So we totally do understand; and we don't want anybody to force your hand with a thousand additional housing units, when you have 3,500 doors.

MAYOR MISCIAGNA: Well, I'm facing that right now. We're in court. And I welcome all of you to come up to Park Ridge, and I'd like to show you what we're dealing with, and can sit down with you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: More than welcome; I'm from North Jersey, and I'm sure my colleague Schepisi will meet me there for lunch and we can go up there and talk.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: I'll buy lunch; we'll all come. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: She's a good lunch buyer, so I'm okay with that.

Mayor.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Mr. Chairman, if I could -- since he mentioned my name.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Mr. Mayor, when I asked people for ideas, I'm not asking them to be a legislator. We have plenty of bills -- and Holy Schepisi has authored many of them -- which are solutions. The fact that we have solutions on the table does not indicate that I don't want to hear ideas from you. So let me start with that.

And number two, the problem I have with the court system -- where we agree -- is that there is no public debate before the courts. This is why it should be with the Legislature. You hear, all the time, that the representative of the attorney goes to court on behalf of the municipality; but the public cannot be heard. This is why it should come back to the Legislature, and that's why I bring up the idea of *your* solutions. Not because we don't have them; I think my friend Holly Schepisi has a lot of them. (laughter)

MAYOR MISCIAGNA: I meant no disrespect.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: No; and let's not get Holly Schepisi started; so we're good to go, we're fine. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: No, but when you ask the people for ideas, I get it, I get it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I see her boiling over there, ready to go. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: We got ideas.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We have plenty of ideas, so let's--

MAYOR MISCIAGNA: I have plenty of ideas; I don't know about-- Solutions are your job.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes; and we'll meet with you in Park Ridge.

Mayor, thank you.

A L B E R T L i C A T A: Mr. Chair, Mr. Assembly Leader, Assembly members, thank you for coming.

My name is Albert LiCata; I'm the former Mayor of Bernards Township in Somerset County; and I also had the pleasure of serving as the Executive Director for a number of years to the New Jersey Conference of Mayors.

I've traveled the state, over the years, and dealt with mayors from cities, to small municipalities, to rural boroughs, talking about affordable housing and the impact it's had on us ever since the days of COAH.

I come to you today to tell you that, as a Mayor, a former Mayor, our town did certify in both prior rounds of COAH; we were one of the few that did. We took a proactive stance to meeting our need for affordable housing, and then some, banking significant numbers with then Shirley Bishop and the COAH people.

Where we're at today, with the courts handling this issue, is just not right. We need to bring it back, and take a step back, and give it some time -- both as municipalities and as a Legislature -- to define and detail a plan, moving forward, that will meet both the need for affordable housing and ways to respect local municipalities' governing abilities; to work within their master plans and meet growing needs.

So what I suggest -- and I mentioned this to you, Assembly Minority Leader -- is to enact COAH once again. Now, as a former Mayor, I was never a big fan of COAH; it's just how we get there, from point *A* to point *B*. But by enacting COAH -- that was something that both Republicans and Democrats, at the time, agreed with. If you go back to COAH, there are defined rules. There's a procedure; there's established

protocols; there's public input. That can take place immediately under a legislative action.

Now, point *B* to that -- and going back to the Assemblyman's request for ideas -- is that this body can then form a committee with professionals, former mayors, mayors, organizations -- I know the League is here, with a wealth of information and knowledge -- that we can form a committee and work with you to propose concrete ideas and solutions, moving forward, that can address all sizes of communities across the State of New Jersey and report back to you directly with public input. Then we can start the process on moving forward before 2025, when another round would be hitting these tables, and towns would further be imposed upon with court costs and the inability to move those folks who you're moving into these towns, under all these affordable housing numbers, whose towns don't have intra-town transportation. You can put a thousand units in a town, but if they have to walk five miles to the train station to get to work, that's just not realistic.

So, at this point, I ask you to reinstate COAH immediately. Get it out of the courts; stop the endless chain of litigation. Give towns a chance to breathe and save taxpayer dollars. There are so far and so few of them that that's what you can do immediately.

Second, form a committee and let's all work together, in a bipartisan manner, and solve the long-term problem of affordable housing in New Jersey and how we get there.

I want to thank you for holding this hearing today. And I do want to tell you that, as a sidebar, my daughter is here in the audience, and she is a sixth-generation of my town (*sic*) to live in my community. If you

keep imposing these rules, there will be an end game to that longevity and people living in their towns. You're going to have the ratable chase, with the school boards, and taxes continually going up to afford things -- I'm afraid she can't stay there.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mayor, you were doing a great job; you were right on point, ready to stop. (laughter)

MAYOR LiCATA: But Assemblyman, thank you for letting us come today, and thank you all for your time.

I appreciate it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank all of you.

ALL: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And we look forward to -- like I said, you can contact our office. And like I said, be it myself or -- I know I'm in North Jersey; Assemblywoman Schepisi -- we could meet with you, you know--

MAYOR LiCATA: I would appreciate that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I was in Hillsdale last night. So -- I like Westwood; that's where my family is from, so I'll come up and visit.

MAYOR LiCATA: Very good; thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

MAYOR GHASSALI: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: At this time, we have Mayor Al Smith of Scotch Plains; Mayor (*sic*) Michael Viola of Colts Neck; and Mayor Jim Burd of Hopewell.

DEPUTY MAYOR JULIE BLAKE: (off mike) Can I speak for one moment?

Jim Burd does not represent Hopewell Township. I'm the Deputy Mayor; Jim Burd is retired. I'd like to speak instead. And I know that--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Is Jim Burd here?

JAMES BURD: (off mike) Yes, I am.

DEPUTY MAYOR BLAKE: Jim Burd is here.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Well, Jim Burd is going to speak--

MR. BURD: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --and then-- Did you sign up to speak?

DEPUTY MAYOR BLAKE: I did.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay; then you'll be--

DEPUTY MAYOR BLAKE: Jim Burd is no longer a representative of the town.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: But he's still a resident of New Jersey, and he has a right to speak.

MR. BURD: Thank you very much.

DEPUTY MAYOR BLAKE: Okay; (indiscernible) calling up mayors.

Thank you.

MR. BURD: (off mike) Do you want me up there?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Jim Burd?

MR. BURD: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Come on up.

We'll start from my right.

ALEXANDER M. SMITH: Hi; my name is Al Smith.

I'm Mayor of Scotch Plains. I'm a new Mayor; this is my first time, really, in political-- And I was thrown right into the middle of an affordable housing settlement.

So I'll give you my unvarnished thoughts about how to make the process better.

Scotch Plains is a caring, loving town; like everybody, we all agree we need affordable housing. And it was very clear to me, as I walked around and campaigned, the need for affordable housing.

What we wound up with is -- as many of my colleague mayors have pointed out -- we wound up with a bunch of numbers, and we're going to do our best to fulfill. However, they're really very difficult. I mean, we have a number of -- 454 -- affordable housing units, which means we have to build about 2,600 units -- the normal builder's remedy of about 15 percent. We have no train station; our infrastructure is -- can't handle that kind of additional capacity. We have no idea -- impact on schools. These are all questions that are not handled under the court process today. And I think that you need to bring a process back that will allow those issues to be addressed.

And I'm just going to say-- Like I said, I -- you can read my testimony, but I'm going to jump to the end where I have six items I'd like to just--

So here are my recommendations for the process.

Shift the determination of affordable housing obligations from the courts to the State, making sure that the affordable housing needs are transparently calculated by an independent group that reflects the current population growth of New Jersey.

No. 2: Distribute the affordable housing requirements by region, considering the resources of each region, with additional State support required when necessary. Include the mayors in each region to understand development opportunities, infrastructure needs, transportation options, and impact on schools, town services, and town population growth.

Make the minimum affordable housing set-aside percentage for the builder's 30 percent instead of 15. For Scotch Plains, the total number of residential units we would have to build would drop from 2,600 down to about 1,500 -- much more -- while still providing the same 454 affordable housing units that we've agreed to attempt our best to provide.

Provide additional State funding for children living in affordable housing units and attending the local public schools, helping to remove one of the biggest objections we get -- is, what is this going to do to our school system? How are we going to fund this?

Allow municipalities to set aside up to 50 percent of affordable housing in a project for their low-income residents who need housing. I mean, we have people, right now-- If you're in Scotch Plains and we build affordable housing, that doesn't mean you get the first shot at it. You have to get into a regional situation. We think that people who are in need of affordable housing who are living in the township should certainly get the first attempt at it.

Lastly, affordable housing projects containing greater than 20 units should coordinate with New Jersey Transit, county planning boards, and other regional groups to help New Jersey better plan for these kinds of growth.

Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi, a member of the Committee, has already introduced a set of Assembly bills that address many of these recommendations. And I have offered, previously, to the Assemblywoman and Assembly Majority Leader Lou Greenwald, to serve on a panel of mayors.

So my last, in closing is -- it's time for the State Legislature to take the lead and solve this problem.

Thank you.

And thank you for holding this hearing.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Mayor.

Mayor.

MICHAEL VIOLA: Michael Viola; Colts Neck Township. I serve on the Colts Neck Township Committee.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with the Committee, and your addressing a very interesting, challenging, and worthy topic.

Our town is rooted in agriculture and equine industries. We're 31 square miles, with 1 square mile of water, which is the Swimming River Reservoir.

Eighty-one percent of the reservoir's recharge, that serves 300,000 members -- residents -- of Monmouth County, is through Colts Neck. We have three schools; a regional high school with Freehold. We have a volunteer fire department, where tankers actually have to take water

in a tank to the fire, and get set up within six to seven minutes or it's often a total-loss fire.

We do know that there is a component of affordability in New Jersey that everyone in this room is well aware of; housing is absolutely a major component of that.

Also, another geographic limitation of Colts Neck is Naval Weapons Station Earle. Approximately 45 percent of Colts Neck is within the Development Exclusionary Zone, or the actual property line of Earle. Yet we're required, in the housing calculation, to account for that land.

We are required to build 306 affordable units; we're approximately 1,530 total units in the Township, that has a total of 3,300 units now. We have approximately 10,000 residents; in the course of the seven-year period, our population will increase by 40 percent.

The demand on our infrastructure -- we have no rail, we have no Transit. Our employers are all small employers, because we have no water and no sewage. The stress and challenge onto Colts Neck is very similar to Assemblyman Clifton's comments regarding Upper Freehold. We are a country community, designed that way, and this will dramatically stress our infrastructure and our tax base beyond limitations.

So I do believe that -- the recommendation to take the responsibility of resolving these issues out of the court and bringing it back to the Legislature; and not having a cookie-cutter approach. One formula cannot address every community. There has to be some allowance for flexibility. In addition to considering regional transfers, again, perhaps communities should be allowed to take the part of their obligation and subsidize housing in communities where there's a much greater need.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Mayor.

MR. BURD: Yes, good morning.

My name is Jim Burd, from Hopewell Township. I was Mayor of Hopewell Township; now I am President of Citizens Improving Affordable Housing.

And we agree with the original concept that came into existence in 1975. Things, however, have changed, and we need to reevaluate what's going on at this time.

We also strongly suggest that the entire population of New Jersey is totally educated in regards to affordable housing in New Jersey. Without knowing that, we're putting all our weight on you people to do this. And I think we, the members of the citizenship, need to be involved with this.

These people have done great jobs of what they're offering. What I'm talking about is this: What we need is to modify the affordable housing. A few things necessary -- is that we utilize a moratorium, at this time, for everything that's taking place in New Jersey for affordable housing. Stop it now; allow the different municipalities to work on this together, with you people; not with the court.

The other thing is about builders -- the builder's remedy. I think that that should be stopped immediately. That it is a lever that is used to increase the affordable housing, but also the regular housing in every one of the developments. In Hopewell Township, we had 1,300 units that were placed in Hopewell Township. When it was all said and done, 130 were affordable housing units, and they were condominiums. Now

they're talking about 3.5 times larger in Hopewell Township. Even though we're 60 square miles, we were all agriculture. You can't take it and put this in our laps, because we do not have water and we do not have sewer. They brought it in from Trenton Water Works, and they brought it in from Ewing Water and Sewer Authority.

What I would suggest is to look at all this information that I gave you, and in that you'll find that there are people who speak very highly of this -- how it can be done. One of the things is about the people who were -- who had done a lot of things last year. Not one of those things had anything to do with affordable housing. So if you're going to do this, let's get on the program.

And one last thing. Senator Turner told me that, "Without the support of legislative leadership, it will be impossible to address concerns about the affordable housing demands that have been placed on the municipalities." And she went on to say, "I encourage that you and your group meet with Senator Sweeney and Assemblyman Speaker--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Coughlin.

MR. BURD: Thank you -- "Coughlin. For your convenience, their contact information is enclosed."

Here are their pictures (indicates); this is where they're from. These are the guys who you have to talk to, because when I was here a year ago, we had something moving from the Senate, and it stopped before it got before you people.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Former Mayor, thank you for your time.

MR. BURD: Thank you very much; and I hope that something is done with this.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And we thank each one of you for your testimony at this point.

MR. BURD: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

I hope that's not anger, Mayor. (laughter) And we're okay. (laughter) This is a peaceful group, and we're working bipartisan.

At this time we're going to bring forward Deputy Mayor Kristin McLaughlin, from Hopewell; we also have John Hart, from the Hopewell Township Committee; and Julie Blake, also a Deputy Mayor.

DEPUTY MAYOR BLAKE: John's in the other room.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We're going to give them a couple of seconds to come over, because there's a delay when they hear on that side. So if Julie Blake and John Hart are on the other side, we're going to give them a few minutes to come over.

DEPUTY MAYOR BLAKE: I'm Julie Blake.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: You're Julie Blake?

DEPUTY MAYOR BLAKE: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay.

McLaughlin--

DEPUTY MAYOR BLAKE: I don't believe she's here yet.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: She's not here yet? Okay.

DEPUTY MAYOR BLAKE: So if she could have a chance this afternoon to speak, if possible

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you; proceed.

DEPUTY MAYOR BLAKE: Thank you.

Should I start?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes.

DEPUTY MAYOR BLAKE: I'm representing -- well, myself and-- I'm on the Committee at Hopewell Township. And I want to let -- I want to thank Mr. Burd for coming today, and representing his voice, and hearing some of our concerns.

We are a Township that is 50 percent rural, and we do not have access to sewers and water, like he said. But 10 percent of our land is actually a sewer service area.

So we were given a number that was quite large; 653 units have to be made in place. We are a location that has about 6,000 current units. You're talking about a 10 percent increase, just of affordable housing.

We settled last year; and I think one of the most important things -- and I really want to make it about what you can do to help us, which is about having a tool, or a mechanism, to slow down growth. You are asking us to grow by 50 percent in 10 years. We've already settled; we've already -- we had four interveners; we're kind of exceptional in terms of how many people were waiting to put, you know, a shovel in the ground.

We also-- While we appreciate, in the last budget, there was \$15 million put in to serve for affordable housing, you must be aware that our infrastructure is not even available to us, at this point. And we are at \$30 million just to put sewers in our ground; \$15 million for the State wouldn't even pay for half of our infrastructure for one plot.

We have to go to developers to pay for what has been required for us constitutionally. We believe in affordable housing; we are friends of

everyone here, and we believe in that cost. But it is too much on our property owners. We have people who are on wells and septic systems who can barely pay for our taxes as is. And what we're asking them to do is unconscionable; it really is. We're working really hard to make it available for everyone.

What we've asked you to do is just decrease the numbers appropriately for areas that don't have sewer and water, right? I don't ask for more than that, because we see the need and we care about everyone in our community.

And Hopewell -- we have many voices, and I want to make it really clear that we care about people being able to live in our houses and our rental units, but we can't afford it.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Deputy Mayor.

JOHN R. HART: Good morning.

My name is John Hart. I've been on the Township Committee, on and off, since 1994; I was Mayor in the late 1990s. I'm still on the Committee right now.

We've been in compliance, like Deputy Mayor Blake said, for -- ever since I've been on Council; over 20 years. But the problem is, we're a farming community; we're not -- we don't-- Like she said, we don't have a sewer service.

But you wanted to have solutions. And I keep telling the people the story that I have when I went down to South Jersey; and I went down to the River Line, and I see these beautiful towns with empty factories, empty warehouses, empty storefronts, around where this River

Line is. And I said, "Why aren't people living down here?" I said, "You can drive down; you can get close to Camden; Camden is starting to revitalize itself, it's looking beautiful. You get to Philadelphia." I see others states -- they take these old factories, they give them tax abatements, they give them the land for free, they redo those factories, put apartments in there, condos, revitalize--

Some of these towns would be begging for development like you're trying to push in our town, because we don't have the infrastructure. These towns have plenty of infrastructure, but no people living down there. And they're right on the river; you're going down toward Philadelphia. I think we need to look at, maybe, revitalizing some of these towns that would like to have some development, instead of trying to cram it all in these towns, like Hopewell, where-- I'm a father of three millennials, and they don't want to live in a big house and have a lawn where they have to get a caretaker and everything else. They want to live in walkable communities where they can catch a train, where they can catch a -- go to restaurants and things like that. We don't have any of that stuff here. We're not walkable at all. We have two walkable communities in our Valley -- Hopewell Valley -- Pennington Borough and Hopewell Borough. We'd like them to be revitalized. But as far as taking the farmland and putting these houses out there, I'm afraid there are going to be a lot more empty houses out there.

We have -- when we first started this process with affordable housing, we had about 125 houses for sale under \$700,000. Now we're up over 200. We've never had 100 percent occupancy in any of our affordable units, ever, since I've been in government. So it's not like there's a need for

it over there. You know, we have no problem making the affordable homes; it's just that there is not enough room for us to make it a walkable community that -- this is what the millennials want.

So I think you should look at other areas and towns in South Jersey; areas where we can help other towns, instead of trying to make towns where there is no town.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you very much; I appreciate it.

DEPUTY MAYOR BLAKE: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: At this time, we're going to have Mayor Paul Vallone of the Borough of Far Hills; and Mayor John Carpenter, of Bernards Township.

Thank you, Mayor; please.

MAYOR PAUL J. VALLONE, M.D.: Okay; thank you, Chairman, and members of this Committee, for giving us a voice.

I want to thank, especially, Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick for his involvement in this important issue.

So this hearing is greatly appreciated. It's a long-needed venue for elected officials to have a voice; to communicate to you.

The courts, basically, as you know, are an unfunded mandate; and this is financially onerous to municipalities, especially smaller municipalities.

I represent -- I'm the Mayor -- I've been for eight years -- of a small municipality in Somerset County, Far Hills. We have less than 1,000

people; we have no manufacturing, no industry, and our largest employer is an Italian deli. A good deli, but that's it. (laughter)

We have 350 households. Our number, from Fair Share, was well over 100, giving us a 20 percent increase in our households. Neighboring municipalities to the north, and to the east, and west were looking at increases of somewhere between 2 and 8 percent. And I think this is one of the problems. There is too much vagary in the numbers that are asked of each municipality.

So what to do? Very simply, I think the movement of this issue, from the courts to the Legislature, is vitally important. I think legislative subcommittees should be developed that deal directly with each municipality; and we give that municipality a voice to deal with legislators -- would be more in tune with that particular municipality.

I think we should revisit the regional transfers, or the RCLs, as a percentage of responsibility that each municipality has. And I think we should be mindful of smaller boroughs -- let's say, 1,500 to 2,500 people -- as the financial ability of these small boroughs to fund and sustain this unfunded mandate is extremely onerous to our taxpayers. It means increased burden of school costs, police, and fire department.

I think, finally -- fifth, I think. is to abolish the 15 percent developer set-aside. If a municipality needs to have, say, 50 units, then somebody should come in and build those 50 units. But to have to build 250 to get the 15 percent is simply unsustainable and financially crippling.

So those are five suggestions that I would make. And again, I just want to thank the Chairman and this Committee for entertaining us, and giving us a much needed voice on this very important issue.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Mayor.

MAYOR JOHN CARPENTER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak today.

I'll get to the point. My name is John Carpenter; I'm the current Mayor of Bernards Township. And Bernards Township is one of the few towns that achieved third round substantive certification in the COAH process. Only 10 percent of towns did so.

We have a long, 30-year history of doing our best to accommodate our obligation for affordable housing. We serve veterans, people with cerebral palsy, old people, and young people; anyone who's part of the program, we provide housing. So we are really proud of that -- the diversity of the housing that we provide.

The problem with it is, it's turning our town into one giant condominium development. I grew up in town; as a young man, our town had 3,500 households and 10,000 people. Today, it has 10,000 households and 30,000 people. The problem is, we don't see any end in sight to this. We're struggling right now to meet our obligation with a settlement with Fair Share Housing Center. And when we do settle -- we've had an intervenor -- there are going to be hundreds and hundreds of new homes built in our Township. We're going to be 60 to 65 percent high-density housing. It's just changing the character of our town; along the way, it's increasing our taxes. The traffic density in our town is horrific; you can't get anywhere in the morning or the evening.

And the impact on school enrollment is terrible too. We've had to build a new elementary school, and added on to our high school two or

three different times; a bonding for \$50 million or more to accomplish these things.

We're in favor of affordable housing, but we need limits on it. We need to know that there's an end in sight for our town -- that there's a maximum density and congestion that we're going to be required to accommodate.

I think it's important for the Legislature to take up this issue. Some key things that I think need to be accomplished: Treat every town individually; that is, each town is unique, and there are over 500 towns in New Jersey, as you know. I think it's essential that we eliminate the builder's remedy, and I think it's essential that the Legislature act -- take back the implementation of the courts' decision from the Fair Share Housing Center. Because it puts towns in a crossfire between builders who want to build thousands of units in your town, and the Fair Share Housing Center that's using the builders as a lever to accomplish their goals from what they consider to be reasonable obligations for every town.

I think we know best what's best for our town. We want to continue to meet our obligation with respect to affordable housing. We need you to pick up the mantle of your responsibility in this matter. And we can no longer tolerate the Supreme Court farming out the implementation of their decision to a private group called the *Fair Share Housing Center*, which I believe receives funding from builders' organizations. I'd like to know where all their money comes from.

It's a very bad situation for the towns; we're between a rock and hard place. Mayor Vallone and I are good personal friends, but we have a contentious issue between us because of some affordable housing

development on the border between our two towns. It pits towns against towns, neighborhoods against neighborhoods, and neighbors against neighbors. It's a terrible situation; you need to pick it up and you need to solve the problem for the State of New Jersey.

And unless the Democrats take action to solve this problem, it will not be solved. Because it's no secret: the Democrats control the Legislature, the Democrats control the Governorship--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We had a Republican Governor for eight years--

MAYOR CARPENTER: We're here today now--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --we've had Republican Governors before then. So this is not going to be just a Democrat--

MAYOR CARPENTER: Sir, this is my three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mayor, I'm going to ask you to wrap it up; your three minutes is wrapped up. I'm the Chair of this meeting. (laughter)

MAYOR CARPENTER: Okay; very good. I respect that, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So, at this time, we're not going to make this a partisan meeting and concern, all right?

Thank you.

MAYOR CARPENTER: I just think that we need you to help us. Because if you don't solve this problem, it's not going to get solved.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: That's what you're saying. We're going to help each other.

MAYOR CARPENTER: I appreciate it; I look forward to it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

MAYOR CARPENTER: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you very much Mayor;
thank you.

Thank you.

At this time, we're going to bring forward Lori Dibble, from the
Manufactured Home Owners Association of New Jersey.

At this time -- I know we do have people in the other room. So
just to get ready, so you know who is coming up next -- after that will be
Jeff Kolakowski of the New Jersey Builders Association; Nicholas Kikis,
from the New Jersey--

(confers with staff)

Margot Gray will be after Jeff; and like I said, there is a delay in
the sound going to the other room. So if we could give them a few minutes
to come over.

J E F F K O L A K O W S K I: (off mike) Mr. Chairman?

Jeff Kolakowski; this is Tom Troy (indicates). We're ready to
go, now, while we're waiting for the other person to come down.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: She's coming right here; she's
right here.

MR. KOLAKOWSKI: Oh, I'm sorry.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Lori.

Thank you, Lori.

L O R I D I B B L E: Good afternoon.

My name is Lori Dibble. I'm with the National Manufactured Home Owners Association; and also the Manufactured Home Owners Association of New Jersey.

I'd like to talk to you about manufactured housing, and how manufactured housing could be utilized as part of your affordable housing needs.

There are about 36,000 manufactured home households in New Jersey; a good portion of this housing is affordable housing. It's probably the largest source of unsubsidized, affordable home ownership in the state. In the country, it is the largest source of unsubsidized, affordable home ownership.

In New Jersey, we are very fortunate in some ways, because 60 years ago an organization was founded that helped to write very proactive laws to protect people in manufactured housing. In most manufactured housing communities, people own their homes on land that they lease. In New Jersey, there is a law -- the Mobile Home Protection Act -- that gives people in manufactured housing communities the right of first refusal, or purchase opportunity, for the homeowners and residents to purchase those communities.

MICHAEL ARON: Sorry, Mr. Chair (replaces media microphone).

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Only Mike could get away with that. (laughter)

But go ahead; you were fine.

MS. DIBBLE: No resident-owned communities -- well, one resident-owned community does exist in New Jersey right now. But the law that we have is flawed. So in order for the State to really protect, and

utilize, and preserve manufactured housing communities, we need to have some legislation that strengthens the opportunity to purchase.

Right now, Eatontown is using a manufactured housing community as part of their COAH requirement; Robbinsville is working through utilizing eminent domain and municipal bonds to purchase a manufactured housing community, and use that as part of their COAH requirement. This is an untapped resource of affordable housing in the state, and preserving is a public good. And preserving it either through nonprofit, government, or resident-ownership is a really, really smart choice.

Using manufactured housing to satisfy affordable housing requirements is cost-effective. In new developments, using manufactured housing is cheaper; you get your affordable housing up and running faster.

But there's a stigma to it, and that's something that we need to address very proactively. Manufactured housing is--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I'm going to have to ask you to wrap it up.

MS. DIBBLE: Okay.

Manufactured housing is currently not part of our State's consolidated plan. The HMFA does not set aside any fundings or programs that assist manufactured homeowners. And we really could do a lot with a little in the manufactured housing realm.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you; we appreciate your testimony today.

MS. DIBBLE: Thank you; thank you all.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

And at this time, we're going to bring forward Tom Troy and Jeff Kolakowski from the New Jersey Builders Association.

THOMAS F. TROY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning.

Members of the Assembly, my name is Thomas Troy.

I'm here as a-- I'm wearing two hats; first, as President of Sharbell Development Corporation; we've been proudly building in New Jersey since 1984. Over that time period we've built in excess of 4,000 housing units in central New Jersey -- Mercer, Middlesex, Somerset, and Burlington County -- including those-- In many of those projects were inclusionary affordable housing units. We believe that the tool of allowing inclusionary development, connected with and as part of market rate development, is a vital tool that should be continued to be used to supply affordable housing in towns and places where people want to live -- where they have better access to educational facilities, to jobs, and infrastructure.

I do not believe it's appropriate to remove the process that's in place right now. Unfortunately, for more than 15 years, there hasn't been much accommodation from the individual municipalities when it comes to builders looking to build inclusionary and somewhat higher density housing communities in many of these towns. I understand the pressure that these towns are under, and I understand the reality of having to make these things work. But to take away any means of imposing of some of these obligations to be satisfied -- not just put on paper, but actually satisfied -- we think is a mistake.

The New Jersey Builders Association has 1,000 members, many of whom are doing inclusionary development both in urban and suburban

areas. We are a vital tool for not only process and policy, but also implementation of these types of communities.

I'd like to turn my time over to Mr.--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Kolakowski.

MR. TROY: Mr. Kolakowski; I beg your pardon. I'm getting too old for this. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: You have your own three minutes; you wrapped up, so we're not yielding--

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: No yielding a turn. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --and we'll start over; yes.

MR. TROY: Well, honestly, I could tell you that we -- I believe that there are some tools--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Now you come back. You did a really good job at first, now you're-- (laughter)

MR. TROY: Well, no, I want to offer-- You guys asked us for some suggestions--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: No, we appreciate it.

MR. TROY: Keep the builders at the table, number one; bring back some of the tools that were in place 20 years ago. Regional contribution agreements will allow many of the pressures that some of these suburban mayors-- And I understand the smaller towns are under a lot of pressure. It's impossible to build 350 units in a town with 1,000 existing.

But bring back the regional contribution agreements; bring back more accountability as to how affordable housing trust funds are spent; and put some sort of time limit on when those funds get spent. And I think that will incentivize some of the placement of affordable housing in places

where it really wants to be -- in places where infrastructure exists, where job access is important, and make it easier for people to move into these units.

We've built affordable buildings in the past that sat empty for two or three months after the units were finished because we couldn't get qualified people to get in because of the process, the section process.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I'm going to ask you to wrap it up.

Thank you.

Yes; Assembly Minority Leader.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Chairman, one quick question.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Just so I'm clear. It's not your testimony that you believe that the court system is the proper vehicle for making these decisions.

MR. TROY: I did not say that, Assemblyman.

I think, regrettably-- Nobody likes to go to court. And for the record, NJBA has not paid a dollar to Fair Share Housing.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: I just--

MR. TROY: Just to keep the record clear.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: So if the Legislature addressed this issue, you'd be comfortable with that, generally -- that vehicle to solve the affordable housing issue.

MR. TROY: Assemblyman Bramnick, I welcome a solution. Due to the absence of a solution for over 15 years, I don't see that the Supreme Court's process -- and now the court process which we participated

in, in a couple of counties now -- is anything but necessary. You guys come up with a better plan, we're not opposed to it.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: I'm not arguing with you. By default, the courts have taken over. But you're not opposed to a solution by the Legislature?

MR. TROY: If it's timely, and it solves the real problem, and it gives us the opportunity to do what we do best -- which is build housing in great locations so that people of all income levels can live there. You know, we're not going to go backwards to 100 years ago, where everybody had a tractor and we lived on 10 acres of land.

This is the most urbanized state in the country; I think we all know that. But I think we have to also be mindful of how we're going to accommodate all sectors of the economy.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

MR. TROY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Now, you know, you've become a witness on the stand. You have two attorneys; and now we have Assemblywoman Schepisi -- with your question, please.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

A quick question -- one of the biggest concerns that I have being an attorney; representing communities, developers, being involved in banking, listening to mayors -- is your organization keeping track of the number of new units that are all coming in at the same time? Does anybody keep track of this on your behalf?

MR. TROY: We have very accurate records of the units that are built, annually and quarterly, within each of the four different locals that our organization represents. We're broken into four smaller local organizations; but also on a state level. New Jersey Builders Association keeps track of building permits that are issued by region, so that we understand what the volume is, and what's shifted over the last 15 years. Even more recently, since the bottom fell out in 2008, there's been a real shift, as many of you have heard already today, from suburban, single-family development towards multifamily development. That shift is somewhat coming backwards now; the millennials, who everybody was happy about moving into all the urban areas, are now starting to mature and have kids. They're looking for *affordable* -- small *a* -- housing in suburban areas as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Okay. So what are the current numbers, under the settlements for housing, coming down the pike?

MR. TROY: I know that there are significant-- I can't quote you, town by town, or county by county, ma'am. I'm not here for that today,

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: You can provide that through our offices to us.

MR. TROY: We certainly have all that data.

Mr. Kolakowski--

MR. KOLAKOWSKI: Mr. Chairman, if I may.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes.

MR. KOLAKOWSKI: Jeff Kolakowski, with the New Jersey Builders.

I think the more simple answer to your question is the Department of Labor, through the U.S. Census Bureau, tracks building permits. And the Department of Community Affairs also tracks building permits. I don't know if there's one entity that has been able to extract, out of the total building permits here in the state, how many are the result of affordable housing settlements. Truth be told, there are not many, because the settlements are just starting to happen, and there are not many shovels in the ground.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Well, I mean, by way of example -- Jersey City, just over the past several years, has issued over 37,000 new permits for residential units. Out of those, there is, maybe, a handful of affordable units because the urban areas don't have affordable housing obligations.

But under-- And I spoke to this just a little while ago, and it's why I think maybe your organization would stay on top of it, or have concerns about it. Just out of a sampling of 39 communities -- and we're talking smaller communities; we're not talking cities in New Jersey -- coming down the pike, just out of their affordable housing obligations, we're talking about almost 30,000 market-rate units that are all coming in at exactly the same time in a small area; where we have a state that's had a 0.03 percent population increase.

I'm just wondering, you know, based upon representing all these members and builders, if there's any concern about flooding the market; or if anybody is even taking a look at that from that angle.

MR. KOLAKOWSKI: Assemblywoman--

MR. TROY: I will readily confess that every builder thinks that his project is going to be the successful project, no matter how much competition we have. That's just human nature; I've been doing this long enough to know that. I don't mean to be glib about that.

I believe that there is absolute sensitivity to potential overbuilding in certain areas. It does happen; it's happened in the past. It happened in the late 1980s in the suburbs with condo overbuilding; it's happened, previously, in other places in the country with different types of housing; it happened here in New Jersey with senior housing, at some point, in the mid-2000s. If you may recall, there was a conversion statute. Those are market forces that happened. It's impossible, unless you're in a command economy, where you can say, "Okay; I'm only going to let you guys build X number of units per year." Nobody wants to see that happen because of all the other ramifications that come from it.

But financing is starting to get more difficult for those of types of communities because of the numbers that are out there. Not every one of those 30-some thousands units, that you're hearing about, are going to come down the pipelines at the same time.

MR. KOLAKOWSKI: Yes, and if I could just add to that.

The affordable housing litigation is about towns providing a reasonable opportunity for the construction of affordable housing.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: No; these are actual projects. These are actual projects. These aren't, you know, overlay zones; they aren't anything--

MR. KOLAKOWSKI: And just because the number is in the settlement -- that's to make up for 25 years--

MR. TROY: Well, what's the--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: We can't hear you.

MR. TROY: I'm not sure that I understand exactly the nature of the question. It started out about numbers; and I understand that there may be a disproportionately low number of affordable units that are included in the very high volume of units that are approved and under various stages of development in Jersey City. I'm not quite sure what that--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: No, I'm sorry.

MR. TROY: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: I gave Jersey City just as an example. You had spoken about how there weren't real opportunities for development until the courts had stepped in, and that's why your members support this. I gave Jersey City as an example of where a lot of development opportunity has existed without the affordable housing component; and a lot of things being issued, a lot of building taking place.

My question is more of a function of, you know, now, moving forward, with all of these obligations coming down at exactly the same period of time -- oftentimes aggregated in the same pocket of communities, as we heard some of the mayors testify to, where, on their border, communities -- whether or not it be Montvale and Park Ridge, whether it or not be Scotch Plains and-- You have these communities all being forced to put thousands of units, simultaneously, all throughout the state, at the highest density, largest amount of building that we have probably ever seen take place. And my question is -- representing the builders, keeping track of

this stuff -- whether or not you, as an organization, have concerns about whether or not we can even sustain the numbers that are coming down the pike right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And guys, before you answer that question, we're going to wrap it up here, because we do have a lot more people.

MR. TROY: Absolutely, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And obviously, you're important in this whole process, and you would have an infinite amount of information that would benefit all of us. I'm just going to ask any information that Assemblywoman Schepisi is asking, or any questions, that you provide that for -- to us, through OLS--

MR. TROY: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --and we will provide it to each and every Assembly member here, and anybody who needs it.

So at this time, Jeff, I'm going to ask you to wrap it up.

MR. KOLAKOWSKI: Perfect, perfect.

I just want to be productive here and offer some solutions on how do we actually get construction of affordable housing going in our state.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes.

MR. KOLAKOWSKI: So here are our five broad kinds of themes.

Less costly and more efficient land use practices, and the elimination of multiple layers of review here in New Jersey. That's

particularly when it comes to the Municipal Land Use law, as well as the DEP permitting process.

Increase financial support for the construction of affordable housing and diversions of affordable housing trust fund monies.

Incentives for consumers to be more present when it comes to green building and energy efficiency. Don't mandate these things; let's incentivize consumers to go there, and to pick out the most cost-effective ways to make our economy and our environment better.

Facilitate redevelopment. Due to the scarcity of land, redevelopment is going to be the biggest sector for growth here in the future; yet we still have barriers for this type of development, particularly our antiquated liquor license laws that are going to support the live-work-play communities that a lot of the millennials and baby boomers are looking for and are moving to.

Our current land use policies just don't accurately reflect the evolving land-use trends and consumer demands. We need a better way of, kind of, matching those up.

Equally important is making sure that we're mindful -- that we don't stifle or make more difficult urban revitalization, particularly in the most distressed areas of our state.

Mr. Doherty, who testified previously, talked about the bills that are pending to limit the effectiveness and utilization of pilots, or tax abatements. We need to do everything we can; that's what has driven the urban redevelopment over the last 20, 30 years in our state. We absolutely need to preserve that tool.

And we also need to be mindful of other initiatives that are coming down, such as overburdened components of fire safety in multifamily buildings that would really lead to the unaffordability of housing. This is about -- as most public policy issues are -- striking the right balance, and we just have to make sure we do that.

And then lastly, just one thing that's kind of a huge issue to the industry, is the skilled trades. We heard a lot of talk about jobs and about investment in the community. We have a shortage of skilled trades. We have this attitude of New Jersey that we're not pushing people into skilled trades. We have this college-prep mentality; we need to change that. We're very enthusiastic about the Legislature's conversations on that, as well as the Governor's; and we think that we could do more in that space.

We absolutely want to serve as a resource to this community. Please don't hesitate to give us a call; we'd be happy to answer any questions or engage in any conversations you have, and we greatly appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And we appreciate both of you. And I hope you guys will be travelling with us as we go throughout the state, because you obviously are a hot button in this whole issue that, you know, will shed light to many people, including myself.

So we thank you for your testimony.

Thank you.

MR. TROY: Thank you. I will send you a response to your questions.

MR. KOLAKOWSKI: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: At this time we have Margot Gray, a constituent of Assemblywoman Schepisi.

(Ms. Gray testifies before the Committee with the assistance of two American Sign Language interpreters.)

M A R G O T G R A Y: Am I allowed to use a timer to give my testimony, so that I can be aware of where I stand?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We will give you a one-minute warning.

MS. GRAY: Oh, that would be wonderful; thank you.

Good afternoon -- or, good morning, rather.

My name is Margot Gray; and please forgive me for being a little bit nervous.

I'm here to address three issues that are happening within my township -- the Township Committee, the Mayor, and some of the other issues. We have a deadline of December 31 to make sure we have resolutions to present a bill.

So we have 905 apartments. I live in Cranford, by the way; and so in the center of town there is a train station, which is easily accessible. And they're talking about building the affordable housing, or the units, a great distance from that train station -- an actual border of the Township of Cranford and Clark. So it is quite a walk to get to the train station.

I am not against affordable housing at all; but we have a lot of development issues going on and overcrowdedness.

The developers are pressuring us to do more building. And they're saying that the Planning Board must build on a specific number of acres.

They are being told what they can build and where they can build. And what I noticed was that on the chart it said that three-bedroom apartments were listed for the affordable housing units. And I know that we live in an age of diversity; and I've lived in Brooklyn, and people don't like to live so far away from the town center -- you know, close to a bus stop. So it's very, very unusual that they're building so far away from the town center.

And also, we've had experience -- problems with flooding; both Essex, Union, Middlesex-- And I've noticed that our Planning Board is not able to address these issues.

Do you have any questions for me?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: No; one minute. (laughter)

MS. GRAY: Again, the concerns in Cranford are a lot of flooding. And the Mayor has implemented something with the three counties and several mayors, who joined us to ask for money to fix the flooding problems from the river. We've had problems with Superstorm Sandy and Irene. I thought, you know, in terms of-- They want to build something close to Clark; but the problem is, where they are talking about building this there's only single-lanes roads. And I noticed that it's very difficult to even just get out of your driveway. And, for example, with the Superstorm, we've had a lot of experiences with power outages, trees down blocking the roads. So all of those problems contribute to this.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: You can wrap it up; you can summarize.

MS. GRAY: I was, again -- I was hoping that you would hurry to make a decision to remove the courts from this process before December

31. Because I noticed that the people in our town who are involved -- the planning boards -- seem to be going crazy and are very, very frustrated and nervous about the courts' involvement. They are very much against further building; they're concerned about traffic, accidents that have happened there.

And again, you know, there has been a lot on social media about 150 members of these-- We initiated a group, that we post on Facebook, to express our opinions and share our ideas within the community -- how we feel about what's going on, and the lack of attention that we're getting to our needs.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We appreciate your testimony.

Does any member have a question for Ms. Gray? (no response)

And Assemblywoman Schepisi, you now represent Cranford. You have become a State figure, as we all knew already. (laughter)

Minority Leader, be ready, you know; she's-- (laughter)

No questions? (no response)

We thank you for your testimony.

MS. GRAY: You're welcome.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you; thank you very much.

Next we have Kevin Walsh, from the Fair Share Housing Center.

Mike?

MICHAEL McNEIL: Yes; mine is short.

My name is Mike McNeil; I'm the Chairman of the State for the NAACP. Also, I'm the Chairman for the organization called Solutions to End Poverty Soon, known as STEPS. We're the organization that deals with homelessness and everything else. We're the ones who had to deal with the homeless of Tent City, as you all heard of.

I heard a lot of things today from a lot of the mayors. And I'd like to ask the mayors one question, and they don't have to answer it today. You know, at one moment, I thought they were agreeing with affordable housing -- that we needed more. But it seems like it's the same old thing. "Yes, we need it, but not in my neighborhood." So that sort of bothers me, and that's one of the things that NAACP is looking at.

And that's one of the things that we're going to have a conversation on; I believe we're here on the 31st -- on the 31st, I'll be back here to talk about some things that I really don't want to talk about today. I think it's some things that we need to talk about.

And the number one thing is that, I think that the mayors and everybody else needs to be honest. The only way that we're going to fix this problem is that we have to talk about things that we don't want to talk about. I'm going to hear some things that I really don't want to hear. But the only way that we can fix them is that we have to agree that this is the way to go.

So I think that we all agree that we need affordable housing. That's what I heard today; and I really heard that. But the part that bothers me is that, I sort of heard that; but at the same time, there's always ways to force certain people from getting into these affordable housing. You know, there are all types of tactics; you know, looking at credit scores

and things like that. I mean, here's a person who is on the moderate-, low-income, and they have, say, a medical bill. And all of a sudden, you know, some of these people are being denied into going into some of the houses today. So I have some concerns about that.

I have some concerns about -- there's not enough affordable housing being built. My concerns, again, is what about the affordable housing that the mayors already have in their town with the 30-year affordability -- has gone away. Why can't they decide they want to keep some of that affordable housing? Where does that number go; can anybody answer that? That number is not incorporated?

Yes, ma'am.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: This is actually going on in one of my own towns, so I can speak to it.

Mahwah, New Jersey, was one of the communities that got sued back in the 1970s and 1980s, for segregation purposes.

MR. McNEIL: Right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: They did everything they were supposed to do. They built pretty significant amounts of affordable housing, as well as high-density housing. Because of the deed caps being 20 years, 30 years, they now find themselves in the position where all of their affordable housing is no longer affordable housing.

MR. McNEIL: Right

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: So what ended up happening is, the community went to court and tried fighting to retain the deed restrictions so that that would remain affordable housing. They were told they couldn't do it. They tried buying out some of them; couldn't do

it. And then they are being told that, essentially, it's as if they had never built any affordable housing and have to start from scratch.

MR. McNEIL: I commend them.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: So that's something where it's a system that's not working in that regards.

MR. McNEIL: That's why I'm here, Mr. Chairman.

And I'll be back here, on July 31, to discuss some things that -- it's going to be hard for me to talk about, because I understand why people really don't want to see affordable housing being built in the neighborhoods. As I said, I've been in this business of affordable housing over 35 years; so I understand affordable housing. And I truly understand why people don't want to see it. I was part of the renter's (indiscernible), that you've seen; everybody, I'm pretty sure, has seen that. Just fortunate enough that young lady, just recently now, got a house. And thanks to DCA -- of rearranging the voucher -- that we brought her down to Ocean County, thanks to an organization called O.C.E.A.N., Inc.

So we do need affordable housing; but we need more. And I think that you need to have a conversation with a lot of the mayors where we can sit down and honestly talk about what the true fear is about affordable housing.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mike, and I totally-- The tough question is sometimes the elephant in the room--

MR. McNEIL: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --that we have to address.

MR. McNEIL: Right; that's correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And until we come to a solution for all this, that has to be addressed.

MR. McNEIL: That's what I'm saying; okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: You know? So that's without question.

MR. McNEIL: And I'll be back on the 31st--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay.

MR. McNEIL: --of this month to meet with, I guess, some of you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay.

MR. McNEIL: Thank you.

KEVIN D. WALSH, Esq.: Chairman Wimberly, members of the Committee, Leader Bramnick, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Kevin Walsh; I'm the Executive Director of Fair Share Housing Center, an organization that has worked, since 1975, to promote racial and economic integration in the State of New Jersey, which is one of the most racially and economically segregated states in the country.

Mount Laurel has succeeded in creating over 80,000 affordable homes since 1975. That is one of the most successful programs of its kind, and it's needed because there are 565 municipalities in New Jersey that make decisions in their self-interest and ignore the racial and economic segregation in our state, and ignore the need for affordable housing.

Consider this: Municipalities throughout the State of New Jersey sat on \$160 million that they were free to spend to meet their

affordable housing obligations because they simply elected not to spend it. We helped save that money; we worked with the League of Municipalities to keep Governor Christie from taking it. But municipalities were just delighted to sit on it. Why did they sit on it? Because they didn't want the housing that it was available-- that could be built with it.

The fundamental problem in New Jersey is that municipalities use their zoning to exclude. They use their zoning to exclude people with disabilities; they use their zoning to exclude African American and Hispanic families.

That is the fundamental problem that we're dealing with. We are not dealing just with the problem of housing and supply. We are dealing with the problem of African American and Latino families, principally, being excluded from the tremendous educational, job, and other opportunities that suburban municipalities have. That is how Mount Laurel started, when the Mayor of Mount Laurel showed up at the AME church, in 1970, and said, "If you people can't afford to live in our town, you'll have to go somewhere else."

It is the problem that has continued as, throughout the state municipalities overwhelmingly zone for nonresidential development and fight residential development.

Where are the hearings? Where is the outrage about all of the nonresidential development, 16 times the amount of residential development in Monmouth and Somerset counties? Who's concerned about that -- stripping people of opportunities to live in good communities? Who's concerned about that?

We hear -- for the first time, actually -- I haven't seen a hearing start with all of the members saying that they support affordable housing. But do you support racial and economic integration for lower-income black and Hispanic families who are stuck in low-opportunity communities? Who supports that?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: I don't think there's anybody who doesn't. And--

MR. WALSH: Well, good, because then we -- if we could--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Assemblywoman, we're going to let him wrap up his testimony. Then I'll give you an opportunity to speak.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: I'm sorry. Yes, this is a man who has, literally, in writing, called me a xenophobe, a racist, and a whole host of other things. So I'm, you know--

MR. WALSH: That is not true.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We're not going to allow that today. That will not happen.

We're going to let you wrap up your statement.

MR. WALSH: One cannot discuss Mount Laurel -- one cannot discuss affordable housing in the State of New Jersey without recognizing what you, sir, called the *elephant in the room*. We are one of the most racially and economically segregated states in the country. We celebrate Martin Luther King Day and we -- our policies, too often, especially at the municipal level, result in racial and economic segregation. And the proposal to -- saying that we should stop the Mount Laurel court process, and saying

we value affordable housing and what it brings, is like saying we believe in health care, but we should stop Obamacare without a replacement.

That is what is being proposed. What has been proposed, and what the bills are, would fundamentally strip black and Hispanic families of the opportunity to live in high-opportunity communities.

And you want to know the best evidence of it? Far Hills; 0.65 percent--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I'm just going to ask you--

Listen, I agree. I appreciate your testimony, but we have to stay within three minutes.

I'm going to give you a couple of seconds to wrap up.

MR. WALSH: All right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So wherever you are at, okay?

MR. WALSH: All right.

Where did the opposition come from today? Far Hills; not even 1 percent African American. Montvale, 1 percent African American; Colts Neck, 1.7 percent; Bernards, 2 percent; Park Ridge, 1 percent.

If we're talking about opportunities for lower-income families; if we're talking about regional opportunities, we're talking about promoting racial and economic integration. And people don't say it as loudly as they used to, but what we're talking about is discrimination based on familial status, and on race, and let's talk about that. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you; I appreciate your testimony at this time.

MR. WALSH: Mr. Chairman, I have 29--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We're going to wrap up; we're going to end it right there.

MR. WALSH: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And we do -- we're going to ask for a short response; we're not going to debate back-and-forth. This is another issue that obviously you could look at the percentage, the numbers. I'm not going to put any of our mayors or townships on the hot seat right now, because this is just this: This is a public hearing.

So I have my own views and concerns about some of the issues, when you talk about segregation and things like that. But this, right now, we're just going to hear from each other; we're not going to debate.

MR. WALSH: Can I tell you one more thing?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: No, no; no, we're not, we're not. (laughter) We're not going to debate here, all right?

Thank you.

Assemblywoman; and then Minority Leader, please.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: With respect to segregation and some of the items brought up -- as a mother of a 2nd grader, as well as a freshman in high school, I can say that just going into my child's classroom and seeing how diverse the demographics are, even in the past decade, kind of -- it doesn't ring true with the narrative that you're putting forth there, Mr. Walsh.

But, you know, taking some of the towns that you've just spoken to, you heard testimony from those mayors that they have been compliant. And some of those communities, they have done everything

that your program has indicated, and yet you're saying that it didn't work. So obviously, whatever we are attempting to do has not been working.

And some of the suggestions and some of the things -- had you wanted to listen and not just label people because they want to try something maybe a little bit different for our State -- included pilot programs, where we go into suburban communities where we have all of these foreclosed homes -- not little apartments, not high-density housing, but actual homes -- and doing public-private partnerships with banks, with other people, to enable people, from certain communities with failing school districts, the opportunity to come and live in a home, with their children, in communities, and really try to do a true integration-type of process.

And, you know, you've been so quick to just try to shut down any conversation, any reasonable conversation; putting forth the most inflammatory language against any member of this body who's attempting to do their job.

MR. WALSH: That is false.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: And that's wrong.

MR. WALSH: That is false.

MR. McNEIL: That's not true.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: All right; Mr. Walsh, we're--

MR. WALSH: If I may--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mr. Walsh -- nope, we're not going to go back. I'm going to give her an opportunity to close at this time; then we're going to hear from our Minority Leader Bramnick. And then we're going to move on from here.

MR. WALSH: Can I give a handout--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And this conversation is not going to end. You can forward that to the OLS staff.

MR. WALSH: I'd like to make a point with this, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay; but we're not at this point.

Minority Leader.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It's unfortunate that the theme that appears to dominate the discussion -- at least, through your Center -- is one of racism. There is a number -- a number of units in any community that would be appropriate or inappropriate, based on infrastructure, based on schools, based on the needs of that community -- traffic, etc.

Don't you believe that there's any legitimacy with respect to some mayors' concerns concerning overdevelopment in a community? Or is that a complete red herring, has no basis whatsoever in the discussion?

MR. WALSH: May I respond, Chairman?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Thank you.

MR. WALSH: So there is a body of case law, there is a statute, there are regulations, and there's a regulatory history that defines municipal obligations. It has been applied since the 1990s. There are rules in place for when a municipality does not have sufficient sewers.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: So you agree with me -- I'm just asking whether you agree with me that there are some rules, and regulations, or legitimate concerns about overdevelopment. That's my only question.

MR. WALSH: No, I didn't say that.

Because the existing rules that are in place prevent the sort of concerns that you're talking to. If a municipality does not have sufficient sewer--

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: I'm not asking-- So your point--

MR. WALSH: You've asked me a question, sir; may I answer it?

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Well, your point--

MR. WALSH: If a municipality does not have sufficient sewer, there are rules in place to address that. Are you aware of those rules?

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Well, I--

MR. WALSH: Are you aware of them, and do you think they're insufficient?

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: If you-- Well, you're a good witness, and I might call you as an expert witness in a trial. But what I'd like you to understand is that I think there is legitimacy, in terms of some number that would be deemed to be overdevelopment. And I'm not sure I'm getting the answer from you, so I will withdraw the question because you're not going to answer it.

MR. WALSH: I did answer it. What I'm telling you is when you deal in generalities--

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Well, then, I'll just make a statement; Mr. Chairman, I'll just make a statement.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: At this time, we're going to let the Minority Leader wrap up here.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: My statement is, you may, through your testimony, throw race into this discussion. That's your prerogative. But I would submit that there are numbers of housing units that would be deemed overdevelopment. And these mayors, who speak before the Legislature, have the absolute right, and have a legitimate basis in saying there are communities that do not have the infrastructure, land, or systems to support that kind of development. Not every decision, not every position of every mayor in this state is racist.

MR. WALSH: Nor did I say it was.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Well, I just want to clear up, when I hear that kind of rhetoric, that there are mayors here who have legitimate concerns about overdevelopment in their community, and it is not racist. (applause)

MR. WALSH: Mr. Bramnick--

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mr. Walsh-- At this time, Mr. Walsh--

And sir, at this point, we're going to wrap up this discussion.

This is a continued dialogue, as you said.

MR. McNEIL: Yes, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Your opinion is welcomed and appreciated because, like you said, some people do not want to address the issue of race; do not want to address the issue of our special needs population--

MR. McNEIL: That's correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --do not want to address the issue of our homeless veteran population; do not even, now, want to address the issue of race when it comes to housing--

MR. McNEIL: Right; that's right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --when it comes to religion. So these are the things--

MR. McNEIL: And Mr. Chairman--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: No, we're not here. We're going to move on from this.

MR. McNEIL: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We will have additional hearings, and we appreciate the outcome, and I would love to sit down and talk with you at another time.

MR. McNEIL: And we'll be back.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: At this time, though, we're going to wrap this point up.

MR. McNEIL: And we'll be back.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: All right; thank you very much.

MR. McNEIL: And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

But Mr. Chairman, every time we come, though, why is it so hostile? You know, when we get treated--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: It's not hostile; it's a discussion. We respectfully can agree to disagree on many issues.

MR. McNEIL: I know; I understand, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So we're not going to leave this hostile, and it's not going to be an issue that anybody is upset with anybody. My friends from the other side of the aisle -- we may disagree with different issues, and we may have a different point of view; but at the end of the day, we're going to shake hands and try to make it right for every resident in the State of New Jersey.

MR. McNEIL: And I'm so happy to hear that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: That's the bottom line.

MR. McNEIL: It's just that every time we come together, things happen.

Last time we were here -- I came with him; I told Kevin I would never come again because they got up -- some people got up and turned their backs on us.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: That's more the reason why we need you here; that's more the reason why we need you here.

MR. McNEIL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. WALSH: Thank you.

MR. McNEIL: Thank you; thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

As we move on, I will--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHAPARRO: If I may just say a quick comment.

We started off really well here; everyone wants to work together. The most important thing that, I think, was said was this is a *human issue*.

As a Latina, I grew up in the Housing Authority; I know how Hoboken has changed drastically. I just want to point something out. Of course we're all for affordable housing; and I don't want to get into about discrimination and all that stuff. But I do know that a lot of Latinos and African American in my community, who want affordable housing in my community, do not want to move to Far Hills. And I don't say that disrespectfully. So I get that. So we do want to work together. We don't want to stray from that; we don't want any one side against the other side, because this will never work. And if we're going to get all hot under the collar and go back -- let's go back to the beginning, where we said we're going to work together, let's work together.

But we have to be open-minded and understand that this has been a hot issue. So already there are so many hostilities because every community had their own issues and different ways. So we have to come together and accept each other's opinion and try to work. If it doesn't work, it doesn't work; but we have to try. And let's respect each other.

That's all I wanted to say. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Vice Chair, I appreciate that comment.

And like I said, at this point now, we do have to be realistic about this. Unfortunately, in America, we have a very, very racial hostile leadership; and many people hear. So I'm not going to peg that on our guys here in New Jersey. They don't have to take ownership for some of the things that are being done in Charlottesville, or even Washington, D.C. We're talking about New Jersey, and the issues that we need to face right now.

So let's be realistic about this. Every day there are racial issues that we all face, regardless; or there are gender issues that we all face every day. So let's, like I said, keep it respectful. That's all I'm asking.

At this time, we're going to bring forth three people: Gary La Spisa, from the New Jersey Apartments Association; Karin McGrath Dunn, from PRD Management, Inc.; and Jacob Fisher, from Pennrose and NJAA.

GARY La SPISA: Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: We can't hear you.

MR. La SPISA: There's been a lot of discussion today about how many units should be developed and where they should be.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Just introduce yourself again, please.

MR. La SPISA: Sorry; Gary La Spisa, of the New Jersey Apartment Association. We represent the owners, managers, and developers of over 200,000 apartment units throughout the state, housing over one million New Jersey residents.

I'm joined by two of my members; and Chairman, if it's okay with you, I'd like to provide an overview, and then allow them to testify; and we'll answer questions together.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes.

MR. La SPISA: Thank you.

There's been a lot of discussion today, and good discussion, on how many units should be developed and where they should be. We're going to focus today on the challenges, though, faced by managers and

owners of these properties; as well as the developers, once we've been asked to come in and develop the project for a municipality.

I appreciate you, Chairman, at the top, mentioning the need for preservation. That is an absolute priority of ours, as well as the production. They must be treated as equally important. If we don't work to provide new units while, at the same time, protecting the units we have and preserving the units we have, we'll never truly meet the need that we're facing.

And I'll leave the questions about production to Jacob; that's his area of expertise. I'll focus on the preservation.

To assist with preservation, we support the creation of a separate tax credit that creates a competitive program where the best-performing affordable properties with expiring deed restrictions can apply for funding to make their needed capital improvements, in exchange for an extension of their affordable housing controls. This helps the properties stay affordable for a longer period of time and improves the quality of life for the residents of those buildings. And that's crucial as we -- like Assemblywoman Schepisi mentioned, as some units are coming off-line, that's one way that we can work together to keep these units affordable in the long-term.

Additionally, we suggest that the State enable municipalities to count some portion of their preservation towards their existing obligation. We're not suggesting a one-to-one reduction; but even a 50 percent reduction of units that are being preserved and kept affordable long-term would go a long way towards helping mayors meet their obligations, while ensuring that the properties that are already in their towns remain as a

high-quality, safe, and affordable place to live. And I think that's everyone's goal.

Additionally, it's crucial that the State enable municipalities to more easily extend pilot agreements on affordable properties. Unfortunately, as pilot agreements expire on affordable properties, property taxes rise at a much higher rate than allowable rent increases. And ultimately, over time, that has a damaging effect on the finances of an affordable property. And every dollar they're spending on new property taxes is one fewer dollar they are able to spend on capital improvements. And we should work together to ensure that as an affordable property stays affordable, that they have a predictable future tax obligation that they can meet, rather than a skyrocketing property tax obligation.

And finally, it's crucial that the Legislature consider the impact that new mandates have on rents. As the Legislature considers changes to registration and inspection procedures, fire code, construction requirements, and labor regulations, consider working with us to ensure that the costs of new mandates don't have an unintended consequence of increasing rents, particularly in affordable properties.

On behalf of the Association, we want to make sure that you recognize that we are a partner. We want to sit down with you and work on this issue, going forward.

So at this time I want to introduce the members who I have with me.

First, Karin McGrath Dunn, of PRD Management, to discuss the challenges faced by owners and manager of affordable properties; and

then Jacob Fisher, of Pennrose, will discuss the obstacles faced by developers of affordable properties.

Thank you.

KARIN McGRATH DUNN: Thank you, Committee.

My name is Karin McGrath Dunn; I'm a property manager. I manage properties for others; which means I don't own any, so I don't have an ownership interest.

Most of my clients are nonprofit organizations that started their buildings in the 1970s and 1980s with a mission towards their community, creating affordable housing in their community.

I haven't heard much this morning about preservation, but it needs to be a word on your brain today.

In the last three years, I had owners turn over -- meaning, sell or transfer -- ownership of over 500 apartment units. I'm a small manager; I manage 2,000 units throughout the State of New Jersey. But if you extrapolate that on a large scale to some of the larger firms, you're looking at a potential loss of a lot of affordable units in just a few years. If we hadn't gone through the red tape organizationally, my organization, for those new owners, those are affordable units we all would have lost.

I manage for families, seniors; I do special needs housing; I'm in urban areas, I'm in suburban areas. I invite any and all of you to visit properties like mine, because they are models for how affordable housing can work. But they're also facing extreme circumstances. They run thin to the margin; we are facing repetitive fees from municipalities that are taking away from our rainy day funds to repair things like roofs. We are facing tax abatement discussions that really shouldn't be on the table; but when

you're coming up against a pilot agreement that's expiring, and you're looking at going from 3 percent of your operating cost as a tax, to 30 percent, that's a huge chunk.

How does that extrapolate into the resident experience? What do you think? The rents are going to go up; they have to. If you have any market units, you're going to have to put that somewhere. How do you pay for that? Or the quality of your housing is going to go down, because either you don't have the money to make the repairs you need to make over time, or you don't have the ability to manage the property in an ongoing way that is a quality property and part of the community. And what we pride ourselves on is being a part of the community; we pride ourselves on quality, high-quality housing. It doesn't matter where you're from, or what your background, or what your income is. You live in our property, you deserve a very nice, safe, and secure place to live. That's a very important principle.

Some of these repetitive fees are something that are just really strapping us and causing our owners to make decisions they really shouldn't have to make.

I have submitted testimony, and lots of solutions and ideas.

I'm open to questions, but thank you for your time.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHAPARRO: Thank you.

Thank you.

J A C O B F I S H E R: Chairman Wimberly and the members of the Committee, my name is Jacob Fisher.

On behalf of Pennrose, LLC, we thank you for your focus on this issue, and for the opportunity to offer our perspective.

For the last 40 years, Pennrose has developed more than 15,000 units of housing in 15 states, including 4,200 units here in New Jersey. This work includes developments in many of the communities where members of this Committee represent, such as Paterson, Jersey City, and Newark.

The bulk of our work in New Jersey has consisted of affordable housing developments, executed through public-private partnerships and funded, in large part, through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit -- which I, surprisingly, have not heard mentioned yet today in this forum.

The Tax Credit provides up to 70 percent of the equity needed to develop an affordable housing community; and it's really the only reliable way of developing 100 percent affordable communities, or mixed-income communities with higher proportions of affordable units than your typical inclusionary project.

It's also a very scarce resource and a highly competitive one. New Jersey receives an allocation from the IRS each year of \$24 million in tax credits to allocate; and that translates into about \$215 million, or 16 or 17 projects totaling, according to NJHMFA, about 1,100 units every 12 to 24 months. Now, while this is a meaningful number, it's a small number, really, in comparison to the need which has been established -- at over 100,000 units throughout the state. And we're here today to advocate for increasing State resources, which would allow for stretching those credits farther to deliver more houses.

As I said, we develop housing in 15 states, and I just wanted to bring quick examples from other states of the types of state resources that we see utilized.

In Pennsylvania, there's a use of realty transfer taxes and gas drilling fees for a \$25 million housing trust fund.

In Connecticut, they provide \$25 million in GO bonds every year to support housing development for affordable and mixed-income projects.

In Maryland, they also provide \$25 million per year in GO bonds through the Rental Housing Works programs.

Massachusetts has its own State Low Income Housing Tax Credit, as well as a State Historic Tax Credit program, which can be used in conjunction with the Low Income Housing Tax Credit. It also provides up to \$1 million per project in housing trust funds.

And then, in Georgia, there's a State Housing Tax Credit, which is paired with Low Income Housing Tax Credits, which can increase the dollar value of the tax credit by about 50 percent, helping make projects feasible.

So New Jersey also had its own State programs: Balanced Housing, Home Express, the ERG program. We're happy to hear that there's \$15 million back in the budget; but we would respectfully encourage there to be more put into the budget or into a recurring revenue stream, or the returns of the Balanced Housing Program, that can help to stretch those tax credit dollars and take the 16 to 17 projects per year to 20 to 25 projects per year.

We'd be happy to serve as a resource to discuss this with the members, as I have colleagues who have worked with all these projects in others states and would be happy to be helpful.

And thank you, again, for the opportunity.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHAPARRO: Thank you.

MS. McGRATH DUNN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHAPARRO: Thank you.

Our next speaker is Christina Foglio from Community Investment Strategies.

CHRISTINA FOGLIO: Hi, how are you?

I am going to submit written comments; so I've summarized them, and I'll just give the highlights.

I've been before this Committee a little bit over 30 years. For those of you who don't know me, I have been the HMFA Director -- don't throw anything at this point -- the Chair of COAH, under Florio and Whitman; I've been a developer for the last 25 years in affordable housing; I've built 3,000 units in New Jersey under COAH mandates.

And way back when, I was the staffer to the major sponsor of the first affordable housing -- the first Fair Housing Act. And I had the pleasure of understanding the legislative intent of that Fair Housing Act. And there were two critical elements of that that I wanted to share with this Committee -- which was, first, housing policy shouldn't occur in the courts; and that was the mandate of the Legislature at that time, and I heard it loud and clear as a staffer. And the second piece was, it shouldn't be a fiscal obligation of a municipality to produce affordable housing.

We're a long way from that original intent.

Also -- and it was just mentioned by other affordable housing colleagues -- that the Housing Trust Fund, the Balanced Housing, was also passed at the same time as that first Fair Housing Act. It was a recurring Housing Trust Fund that's part of the Real Estate Transfer Tax, so that the

State wouldn't be obligated to look for appropriations for affordable housing each year. It was only until Governor Christie that the Balanced Housing started to be pulled into the budget and became a political football, in terms of a budget subsidy. There was always a recurring subsidy for this State to help build affordable housing. We have to get back to that.

HMFA is currently approving what's called the *Qualified Allocation Plan*, which is our largest subsidy for affordable housing in the State; and they are doing it with no guidance, no State housing policy, no priorities -- which is critical -- there's no guidance to a State agency for our largest pot of funds that would help municipalities, and help developers like us, know what the State wants to see built.

The definition of affordable housing -- I want to give you one quick example. We just opened 57 units of affordable family projects in Mount Olive, New Jersey. I think advocates of affordable housing would give this project an A-plus because it's in a town which has a great school system; it's coordinated in an inclusionary housing project; you can walk to a municipal park. However, one in three applications were turned down . because people were over income.

I think we're doing a great job in inclusionary, in terms of reaching down to people 30 percent. But we have to start to think of the people at 80 to 100 percent. That also happens at our senior projects, where, actually, we turn away one in five applicants where seniors are earning pensions at 50 percent of median income, and we cannot house them. So I ask that, as we start this dialogue, that there is a real, kind of, conversation about how we start to define *affordable*. I think we're good at

the one end; but we are really missing out on the people who show up and we have to turn away at the other end.

The one other last point is inclusionary developments. And I know my colleagues just love to talk about other states. Other states are helping inclusionary developments by allowing subsidy for the inclusionary components, which then don't put so much pressure on the number of densities that you need to have those inclusionary units. We're doing the reverse. We are penalizing the inclusionary developments, driving the number up that you need on the density side, and actually making them economically not affordable.

Thank you for your time.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHAPARRO: Thank you.

MS. FOGLIO: I have a larger program.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHAPARRO: Okay, the next three speakers can come up -- that's Jeffrey Surenian, Jyotika Bahree, and Carol Bianchi. I'm sorry if I butchered your name.

If you can please come up.

J E F F R E Y R . S U R E N I A N , E s q . : Okay; thank you.

Three minutes; I could talk for three days. (laughter)

My background -- I represent municipalities in affordable housing. We represent more than 50 municipalities across the state, probably more municipalities than any other two law firms combined.

I've been in the trenches in affordable housing, from multiple dimensions, for about 34 years. And so I can tell you about my experience.

I want to disabuse this Committee of the notion that municipalities are against affordable housing. They are not, and it is not

racial. In my experience, the racial discussion doesn't enter it. The court made it clear it was about income; it's not about race. So towns are struggling to meet their quotas. The racial discussion is not part of that. Units are filled through affirmative marketing.

And I think the point that Ms. Schepisi made about if you look at all these towns with approved plans -- there have been hundreds of towns with approved plans. And that hasn't made the difference in-- You can't say that those towns are doing something racially inappropriate, when they have approved plans, okay?

So I just think it is not helping the conversation to make any racial accusations. It inflames; it doesn't help get the ball down the lane.

I think that there are many legitimate public objectives. The need for low- and moderate-income housing is absolutely one of them, but there are many. And I think the key is we need to learn how to balance the different legitimate public objectives. What you're getting from municipalities -- the blowback you're feeling from municipalities -- is they are getting overwhelmed with Fair Share numbers that they consider to be grossly excessive.

And if you want to fashion a solution, you need to be grounded in reality. And the reality is that 85 percent of the housing in this state is created from two sources: inclusionary development, where you zone a site and 20 percent of the units are affordable; and the other is 100 percent set-aside. That is the vast majority of housing. And how much housing you're going to get in the state-- If your object is to get the maximum number of housing, you need to get your feet in reality. And the reality is that the market will bear very limited amount of affordable housing through

inclusionary development; and 100 percent of set-asides provide twice as much affordable housing as inclusionary development. And the problem is, there are limits on how much tax credits are available. One of the witnesses talked about -- tax credits are the key to that form of housing. There are limits on that; so if you want to produce more affordable housing, you need to look at those sources and find a way to make them more effective.

Why are we assuming 20 percent? Can the developers do more? Why aren't we talking about the economics of inclusionary development? Why should a developer be--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Excuse me; we're going to have to ask you to wrap it up.

But (indiscernible) any questions.

MR. SURENIAN: Okay.

I would close with the following. If you-- I absolutely support the reconstitution of COAH; and I applaud this Committee for getting together, and thinking, and having an honest debate about it. I would suggest to you that you do a study. First of all, you should do a study on four points: growth and development reasonably likely to occur. You need to look at that; that's part of that Fair Housing Act. That's what's going to drive inclusionary -- what's realistic and what's not?

You want to look at-- Everyone is saying exclusionary zoning is the sin. Why doesn't someone do a study and say, to what extent are low- and moderate-income households being excluded because of exclusionary zoning? You will be surprised at what you discover.

There's been a change in the paradigm that was the basis for the Mount Laurel doctrine. It was all about--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I'm sorry; I'm not cutting you off totally, but you had your three minutes; so if you could summarize.

MR. SURENIAN: All right, I have two sentences to tell you what the other two items are.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Finish your-- I appreciate it; two sentences.

MR. SURENIAN: So the change in the paradigm is, you know, now the movement is towards the city, not towards the suburbs. Well, you should look at that. What does that mean in terms of a sensible, affordable housing policy?

And the final thing is, what is a reasonable profit for a developer? The developers don't want to talk about it. If you want more affordable housing from inclusionaries, put a spotlight on that, study that, make sure-- They have to earn a profit, but a reasonable profit. That's how you will advance the policies of this State.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you very much.

Next speaker.

J Y O T I K A B A H R E E: Hi; my name is Jyotika Bahree, and I am a Councilwoman from West Windsor Township.

And I thank you for your time today.

Not a day passes by that I don't have a conversation with a West Windsor resident about increasing development and traffic issues in town. This circles back to trying to meet the affordable housing obligation of 1,500 units that West Windsor Township has.

The fact is that West Windsor is committed to meeting its legal obligation. Is it fair, though, that existing residents' quality of life be grossly compromised by the overdevelopment and sprawl that meeting this obligation is leading to? Get out any time after 5 p.m., and you are bound to get stuck in traffic, trying to weave your way around town.

As West Windsor gets ready to meet its third round obligation for affordable housing, the landscape is about to change, and will start resembling an urban area as high-density developments start to crop up.

The school district is sponsoring a \$115 million bond referendum in November, to finance the building of additional school capacity to absorb increased enrollment it is likely to see as the new developments start to get populated.

The failure of the Legislature to resolve this issue for the benefit of its municipalities has spawned a whole industry of lawyers and consultants. West Windsor saw its litigation fees skyrocket since 2015. We spent \$300,000 last year, and have budgeted \$200,000 this year, for a total of \$500,000 budgeted to meet the affordable housing litigation to dispute the courts' ruling. And if history is any indication, we will probably lose all of that amount.

Our tax dollars are going towards our efforts of trying to get a fair treatment in this issue. Unless our good faith efforts see recognition, the Township is likely to be faced with builders' remedy lawsuits, further engaging our tax dollars.

The irony of meeting this obligation is also that you cannot allot any of these to any of your own residents; and there is also a cap on

credit that you can get for senior housing, even though there may be seniors, and others, in your town who may have a genuine need.

There is also no credit available for abandoned property that might be revamped for affordable units. The latter would be an empowering initiative for a township in meeting this obligation. This clearly seems unfair.

It is the urgent request of West Windsor Township that the Legislature take back power over this process; and that pending legislation be passed to enable New Jersey towns to take back jurisdiction over their own lands and make decisions based on their own free will.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you very much.

CAROL BIANCHI, Esq.: Good morning.

Thank you very much for having this hearing today.

I am a Committeewoman from Bernards Township since 2013, and served as Mayor in 2016.

And I am joined today by several of my colleagues, and I am here with the bipartisan support of my town.

As mentioned previously by my colleagues, Bernards Township has always readily met its first through third round obligations, receiving substantive certification.

I also just want to pause and say thank you, to the Chairman and the Vice Chairwoman, for the way you're conducting this meeting. I think it's very fair and efficient, and I want to thank you.

And I also want to thank the Vice Chair for her comments. This is about working together, and not attacking anyone.

In Bernards Township, we aren't afraid of affordable housing; we are afraid of ambiguity of rules. We are afraid of the cost of litigating in the courts, and we are afraid of overdevelopment that doesn't solve the problem.

I'm suggesting solutions that attack affordability, in addition to looking at -- and not just building more affordable homes. There are other solutions. We need to address property taxes, rents, and condo fees, which are escalating and rendering units unaffordable.

We need to eliminate builder's remedy lawsuits. We need to establish a recertification process, as Assemblywoman DiMaso pointed out. Before we build more, we need to make sure that the existing units are occupied by those for whom they were intended.

We need more tools in our toolboxes so that municipalities can work together to meet our needs.

I'm not necessarily in favor of more committees and more layers of government. In Bernards Township, we do our job, and we do it well. We have zero debt; we have the lowest equalized tax rate in the state, following a pay-as-you-go policy. And we plan for affordable housing just as well. We have a diverse range of housing, including group homes for the developmentally disabled, veterans, and a broad range of incomes.

If you pass legislation, we will get it done and we will do it well. And if Fair Share Housing's goal is truly integration, Bernards Township has been growing in diversity and our doors are wide open. Please come.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you very much

VIRGINIA MANZARI: Good afternoon.

My name is Virginia Manzari. I have lived in West Windsor Township for nearly 20 years, and I currently serve on West Windsor's Town Council as its Vice President.

West Windsor has been very responsible in keeping up with its affordable housing obligation. Despite our good faith, Fair Share Housing refused to settle with us, telling us that they "wanted to make an example" of us.

During the trial, the judge made us pay for a court-appointed expert; and then ignored that expert, and gave us numbers 50 percent higher than what the expert suggested. I think I'd like to get my money back for that expert, actually.

So far, we have spent almost -- we're committed to about half a million dollars in legal fees. Other towns have spent similarly without a single house being built.

In the end, we were ordered to build 1,500 affordable housing units, even though the law clearly states that housing in any round is capped at 1,000 units. Because we have been proactive in building and planning affordable units, we currently have credit for about 1,000 units, leaving us with 500 affordable units that we have to build in the next seven years, by 2025. Unfortunately, that really means that we have to build about 2,500 homes, because the builders get to build four market rate homes for every one affordable home.

That amounts to a 25 percent increase in our housing market; a 25 percent increase in our housing market in seven years. It's just crazy.

In the last two decades that I have lived in West Windsor, our town has changed significantly. But it will be unrecognizable if this

rampant overdevelopment doesn't stop. Our classrooms are already packed, we continue to expand existing schools, and our superintendent is having difficulty finding land to build additional schools that will be needed. Traffic is terrible, our taxes have increased astronomically, and our quality of life has suffered for this overdevelopment.

As a local Councilwoman, people often share their concerns with me. More than anything I hear about people's plans to leave New Jersey. They are tired of seeing farms, fields, and forests replaced with high-density housing. They are fed up. They are done with the taxes, they are done with the overdevelopment, they are done with New Jersey. And I think that's a real shame, and it's something that all of you can change. These housing decisions need to be taken from the courtrooms. We have all -- all of the towns have spent ridiculous amounts of money defending our townships in these lawsuits. And in the end, we will all lose anyway.

And finally, I agree with the gentleman from Hopewell. I believe that there should be a moratorium declared immediately on these numbers that have been assigned, and that the builder's remedy lawsuits need to be stopped.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you very much.

Next we have Scott Elliott from PCIR and NJPCL, I believe; and Terrence Porter from Red Bank Affordable Housing Corp.

You guys can come up together.

S C O T T E L L I O T T: I'm here to thank you guys -- the Committee, the Chair--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Scott, so you're on the clock now, so--

MR. ELLIOTT: Okay.

Scott Elliott; I'm with the Progressive Center for Independent Living here in Mercer and Hunterdon. But I am also the Chair of the New Jersey Association of Centers for Independent Living.

I'm here representing thousands of people with disabilities in the state.

So it's real simple: I heard a lot of words today. There's a big business side to this, and I come from a business background. I'm very lucky, because I have a good job. We now work with people with disabilities; I have been doing what I'm doing, as the Director and the Chair of the Association, for 20-some years. Housing is one of the biggest, if not *the* biggest issue for folks with disabilities -- veterans returning home with disabilities; seniors; you name it.

So what I heard today -- and I'm not going to sit here and talk a lot, because I'm coming from the human side. I have a sister with muscular dystrophy; that's what I have. Again, I'm a very lucky person. An old advocate used to say, "You're an escapee, Scott." That means, you escaped from the system, you were able to make a living.

So I just want -- and I want for the rest of the people of New Jersey with disabilities to have the same opportunity as you all sitting up here today. That's what it's all about. We just need the same choices and the opportunities. There's enough discrimination in this world today, and we just -- there's so much that runs rampant with disabilities -- getting in

restaurants, getting on buses, you name it -- jobs, employers who don't want to hire people with disabilities.

So that pretty much says it. I didn't have a lot to say; I just wanted to say, please don't forget people with disabilities.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Scott.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: Thank you.

(applause)

PASTOR TERRENCE K. PORTER: Thank you for the opportunity.

My name is Terrence Porter; Terrence K. Porter. I am the Pastor of the Pilgrim Baptist Church in Red Bank, New Jersey. I'm also the President of the Red Bank Affordable Housing Corporation; and I am also the Chaplain for the Monmouth County Police Chiefs Association.

This has been a very enlightening experience to listen to all the information that's been shared.

If I could, I think I represent a group of individuals in Red Bank, part of the Red Bank Affordable Housing Corporation. But one of the things that I've noticed about the comments today is that many of the comments from some who have come before you have talked from a place of privilege. And that is somewhat disheartening, and sometimes a perspective is somewhat skewed.

So let me just share with you -- one of the reasons I've been invited here today is because, for me and for the Red Bank Affordable Housing Corporation, it is about opportunity. Affordable housing is about opportunity.

Race does play a major factor in the courts being involved. And if it had not been for the courts being involved in Red Bank, we would have never been able to build a model facility, the Cedar Crossing development. And the Assemblywoman asked about what kind of projects can be done to create opportunities. And let me share with you -- the Red Bank Affordable Housing Corporation has built the Cedar Crossing development, which is a partnership between the City of Red Bank, the Red Bank Affordable Housing Corporation, and the Red Bank Housing Authority.

But what makes this unique -- it speaks to some of the issues that you're confronted with when you were out talking in the community, about how do we develop the infrastructure to support affordable housing. The Red Bank Affordable Housing Corporation has taken on a position -- we believe in home ownership as a way of developing affordable housing. That means we are in the business of developing sites and projects where those who have taken advantage of those housing opportunities are home owners; not renters, but home owners. And as such, they pay to the tax system; they help develop the pool of individuals who serve in your city as volunteers, as well as create-- And you need volunteer firefighters, you need volunteer Pop Warner coaches, you need volunteers in your city. We believe that home ownership allows the owner to have a vested interest in what is happening in the city (*sic*).

So that's been our way of approaching affordable housing. And I'll be available to talk to anyone about what we've done. It's very unique, and it is now the model for many municipalities in the city.

However, we must keep in mind that affordable housing, for those who are somewhat against it, or against the restrictions -- they're

speaking from a place of privilege, meaning that they have opportunities that others may not have.

So what we have to be about in the discussion-- And I've really -- I was really thrown; I thought a church meeting was hot (laughter), but this has been a wonderful experience in terms of being able to see the passion that all of you have about affordable housing.

I commend what you're doing, Chairman; I think that if we could be a part of helping to support that initiative to make the community more aware, then you have our support. And we'll be available to talk to anyone about the Cedar Crossing project in Red Bank, which I think is a model for State communities.

Thank you; and if anyone has any questions--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes; Assemblywoman Schepisi.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Not a question, so much as I would love to see what you guys have done down there. And if you could forward the information, through OLS, I would love the opportunity to talk more.

PASTOR PORTER: Yes, we would love to have you come; and you could pay for lunch. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Okay.

PASTOR PORTER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Rev, the same way; if you could forward your information to OLS, somebody from the staff will reach out to you. I would love to come down and visit also.

PASTOR PORTER: Yes; thank you for your time.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

All right; next up we have Connie Pascale, Solutions to End Poverty Soon, STEPS; Nichelle Santos-Sanders, Legacy's Future; and Jamal Jay, Universal Justice Defense Team.

And if you're in the other room, there are some vacancies -- some seats available now. So if you want to come over; if you can hear this in Room 15, you can come over now. We probably have around eight or nine seats over here.

Proceed.

CONNIE M. PASCALE, Esq.: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My name is Connie Pascale. I worked, for 40 years, as an attorney with Legal Services, primarily doing housing work, until I retired. I started when I was 5 years old; that's why I am here now. (laughter)

And I also am a Board Member of Solutions to End Poverty, known as STEPS.

I just want to say thank God for Kevin Walsh and for Mike McNeil, who raised the real issue; which has been the issue since Mount Laurel began, which is about race. It's about race; that's what it is.

I don't know if everybody on the Committee has read the book, *The Color of Law*, by Richard Rothstein. It should be required reading. It's why we're sitting here now. That book is going to win the Pulitzer Prize. It talks about the intentional segregation of the suburbs, about New Jersey and the United States.

When they built all the affordable housing in the 1950s and 1960s -- the small ranch homes on a slab, eight to an acre -- the Federal government had an express policy that said, "You cannot sell those units to

African Americans.” In fact, they had to put in the deed that they couldn’t sell the units to African Americans. It was intentional segregation, and you can track it throughout the history of the country.

In the 1960s, when the New Jersey Supreme Court said our law against discrimination barred that policy, all of a sudden it went from eight units per acre to eight acres per unit. They found a way to exclude the people. I grew up in a 500-home development, all white, in an area that was suburbanizing in Central Jersey. When one of the people threatened to sell her -- wanted to open a dress shop in the residential neighborhood and threatened to sell it to a black family she knew, they let her open it the next day.

This segregation-- Affordable housing -- the discussion is all about people. It has nothing to do with the units. If we wanted to produce-- If these were all the people who came back from the war in my parents’ generation, they built thousands of units for them, all segregated. If we were talking about that now, we’d find a way to build this housing. You don’t need to build builder’s remedy housing. Why don’t you zone 100 acres for a mobile home park, manufactured homes; 10 units per acre. You’ll produce the affordable units without producing all the extraneous units.

How about accessory units? The Regional Plan Association said that if we allowed people to build accessory apartments onto their homes we could produce 4.3 million units of affordable housing. There are lots of ways to build affordable housing, if we choose. It’s not rocket science, it’s a lack of the will.

I submitted written testimony. I'm going to emphasize that you might want to look at that, because the problem of race persists even when the units are built. They use discriminatory screening, tenant screening, for criminal history. The HUD Office of the General Counsel found that a blanket policy saying if you have a crime in your background you're excluded, is *prima facie* racial discrimination because of our Jim Crow criminal justice system.

Credit history is the same way. The only two studies about credit scores showed that the correlation between low credit scores only correlates to race and class because of the history of discrimination against African Americans, and other people of color, in education, jobs, and whatever.

The same is true of what they call *court filing discrimination*, which is rampant now. If your name ever appeared on the tenancy court list, you will be barred from housing. I have lists of it now.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And we appreciate it.

If you could forward that information to OLS, we will share it with all of our members.

MR. PASCALE: I submitted--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: You submitted it already?

MR. PASCALE: I gave you some written testimony.

But I just want to conclude that part.

I can show you numerous statements about admission criteria where it says if you were ever sued for a lease violation you will be excluded. That policy applies to every one of the 160,000 people who were brought to tenancy court last year in New Jersey. At the height of the foreclosure

crisis, there were 75,000 foreclosures a year. Every year, in New Jersey, there are more than 150,000 people taken to court; every one of them for eviction. Every one of them would be excluded by those policies, and they are in almost every set of admission criteria you can find.

And who do they exclude? Tenants are disproportionately people of color and poor. African Americans -- 60 percent are tenants. They're the ones who are being screened out. So race persists in all of these ways; I list them in my documents.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay; we appreciate your information.

If you have any additional information, please share it, and we will share it with the others.

MR. PASCALE: I can send the written testimony, and I know that--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

MR. PASCALE: I would urge you to also read the book, the report by the Anti-Poverty Network, *Racism and Poverty in New Jersey*. This clarifies why that's such a critical issue. I'll give you this copy, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you. And I'll have one of my staff members talk to you after you're finished with your testimony.

MR. PASCALE: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you very much.
(applause)

N I C H E L L E S A N T O S - S A N D E R S: Good afternoon, Chairman Wimberly, and members of the Committee.

Thank you for taking the time to convene this hearing today.

The Housing and Community Development Committee serves such an important role, because everyone in the State of New Jersey deserves a healthy and safe place to live.

When we cultivate success for all citizens, New Jersey will reap the benefits. We will all be strong, and must stimulate the young minds of the critically poor to show them that there are good decisions to make to provide a bright, successful path.

My name is Nichelle Santos, and I am the CEO of Legacy's Future, a business and community development firm working to increase access to health care; and leveraging innovation and technology to assist with housing and urban development and its important impact on social issues, such as pre-term births, infant and mother mortality, the prison pipeline, opioid addiction, Medicaid and Medicare, and the impact on the State budget.

I'm here today because we are now at a critical moment, where everything is at stake.

An environment was created decades ago to keep the critically poor, critically poor; to give the bare minimum to survive, but not give enough to thrive and become successful.

We have been given an opportunity under the current HUD Administration to help end masses of families and their generational dependency on subsidized housing. In 1964 through 1965, then-President Lyndon B. Johnson set forth policy under the Great Society to help eliminate poverty and racial injustice by providing affordable housing without racial discrimination. Housing was subsidized; single mothers were

incentivized to raise children without a father in the home; families were separated. And as we know, a family separated is a family disadvantaged.

Hundreds of thousands of families across the country were disadvantaged, and it wreaked havoc on the state and national budgets for decades. The current system is broken; we need to implement change for a better outcome to lead to opportunity and success, and break this generational dependency

We can make smart investments now, or we can pay much more later in Medicaid, and Medicare, drug addicted societies, crime, and the prison built for the pipeline. We pay in the schools systems for the special education needed for the developmentally challenged; babies born prematurely from these described situations. We pay dearly.

There is a way to change things. HUD has recently launched a program, the Envision Centers, of which demonstration is premised on a notion that financial support alone is insufficient to solve the problem of poverty. It's vital the inequality gap be closed. Intentional and collective efforts across a diverse set of organizations are ready to implement a holistic approach to foster long-lasting self-sufficiency, bringing private funding to public funding so society has more skin in the game to help empower the poor. Envision Centers will provide communities with a centralized hub for support in the following four pillars: economic empowerment, educational advancement, health and wellness, and character and leadership.

How am I doing on time?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: You're done; but we're going to let you wrap it up.

MS. SANTOS-SANDERS: Okay.

So we would love to continue the discussion, because we need to empower our people and our cities, like the City of Newark, where we're trying to bring the Amazon center. And if we don't cure the problems of homelessness, and gang activity, and the critically poor, we will not be able to attract these corporations to our great cities in the great State of New Jersey.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Ms. Santos.

MS. SANTOS-SANDERS: Thank you.

JEFFREY BOOKER: Again, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and those members of the Committee.

As my partner Nichelle said, there are a lot of things we could talk about, but it's about solutions. We all agree that--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Could you just give your name again? I'm sorry.

MR. BOOKER: It's Jeffrey Booker. I'm the Executive Vice President and Partner of Legacy's Future.

As my partner said, it's important that we all realize we want the same thing. We have to address the issue of housing in the State of New Jersey. It's all in *how* we decide to do that. And again, there are a number of ways to address that.

It's important that legislation engage public dollars to make sure that corporations invest in our state so we can attract new businesses, such as Amazon, as Nichelle said. We also need to offer supportive services to address current issues in places like Newark, and Camden, and Atlantic City; things such as homelessness, gang activity, and pre-term births. We

also need to have legislation to address pre-term births, which is really a stressor financially on the system.

And again, we stand ready to be a resource to the Committee, to the members of the Committee, to address this important issue. Because, again, we can argue about a lot of things; but this will not get done, and not get addressed, unless all sides come together and find a solution. It's not about pointing fingers; it's about finding solutions. We all agree the problem is there; now it's about how you fix it.

So with that in mind, we appreciate the time.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And I thank both of you for our phone conversation yesterday. And I look forward -- the wealth of information that you have that you continue to bring back to these open forums, because I know you're working with HUD and, you know, that agency. Obviously, we have to make sure that we get our due from the Federal level for housing.

MR. BOOKER: Absolutely. And we absolutely look forward to being a resource and a link, if need be, to the Administration for you. We've sat with the Secretary's Office in D.C., and there are programs that are available. But we have to have the right partnerships and the right links to be able to make that work.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, guys; we appreciate it.

Thank you very much.

MR. BOOKER: Thank you,

MS. SANTOS-SANDERS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: At this time we have a Jamal Jay. Is Jamal here? (no response)

All right.

Cynthia Lanouette, Destiny's Bridge; Minister Steve Brigham, from Destiny's Bridge.

CYNTHIA LANOUE TTE: Does it matter who goes first?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: No. Ladies first, if you'd like to; that's fine.

MS. LANOUE TTE: Thank you.

I have to commend you, because you are the most efficient timekeeper I've ever met and encountered in any meeting I've ever been in.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I'm a football coach by trade, so time is very important to me, yes. (laughter)

MS. LANOUE TTE: Okay.

My name is Cynthia Lanouette, and I represent the Destiny's Bridge, Howell Homeless Transitional Encampment for the homeless working poor; affordable housing and working poor. *Working poor* is defined as those working at minimum wage, up to \$12 an hour; or if they're fortunate, \$15 an hour.

With the affordable housing it is my understanding that those low wage earners cannot afford affordable housing. So I feel that there needs to be another level of housing, along with affordable housing: tiny homes.

Over the last four years I have seen two tiny homes built; and over these last four years, to date, these homes continue to remain vacant.

A true affordable housing for the working poor can be created; however, the issue we face in providing affordable rental and affordable homeownership for working poor is a concept that physically cannot be done. It cannot be done because -- the reason is there are barriers, such as zoning laws and codes, that are largely the cause for the lack of affordable housing for our working poor.

I tend to wonder -- could it be just a question of whether this is understood as an urgent issue by those of higher income who already have a safe and reliable place to live? The need to consider housing -- affordable housing for all of our citizens-- Everyone needs a decent home to call their own. What are most people proud of? The pride of home ownership. And I believe the time is now; this is a solution.

How much longer will we allow our fellow American citizens to fail, and know the reality of feeling and being forgotten? A truly affordable home for our working poor will enable to help build a community for all; a vibrant community for all who deserve a place to call home.

Build smarter, build affordable, build smaller. Construction and contractors can profit from this, because it's something we need to do.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

MINISTER STEVEN BRIGHAM: Hello; I'm Minister Steven Brigham with Destiny's Bridge.

I ran Lakewood Homeless Encampment for eight years. It was the largest homeless encampment on the East Coast of America for eight years, due to 120 people. We are in Howell now; we have an encampment of 12 individuals, mostly females. We are the only government-sanctioned

homeless encampment on the East Coast of America; the only encampment from here to the West Coast, or from here to Florida. Nobody in between.

And I've been doing this for 18 years, and I've seen a lot of affordable housing projects being in Lakewood, I've seen hundreds of affordable housing developments put up in Lakewood, almost entirely segregated; government-supported, government-funded, to a large extent.

And again, we had veterans in Tent City; we had the working poor in Tent City; we had people who wanted to do the right thing, but they had no access to affordable housing. Meanwhile, there were thousands upon thousands of affordable housing units nearby that they couldn't access.

Discrimination by design -- they were built too big -- four and five bedrooms -- which eliminated the small family or the small groups of people or individuals.

So again, there was-- I see, looking over the perspective on the horizon of affordable housing, there needs to be, I believe, something more.

Again, personally, I think sometimes government involvement can complicate things; it could be awkward, it could be slow. And if we-- Personally, I don't have any ties to anybody who is financing me; I'm not financed by any political group that gives me an agenda; I'm just a 12th generation American who is looking at this from a perspective of a citizen, an individual, and somebody who is concerned about people who need housing.

So I see that -- what I believe we need to do is create a capitalistic free market, supply and demand housing system where people, again, have a right to have a house that they can afford at whatever size

they can afford; whatever job they have that will let them afford that type of housing. I believe that's the old fashioned America; I believe we need to go back to something that works. I see too many problems, and too many factors in this affordable housing, socialistic system that we've set up that is awkward; a lot problems. Go back to a system of capitalism; free market, where we can afford a house on a small piece of property, 40 by 40, 300 square feet. You can start out there, and then you can move up. That's capitalism. It has worked for us in years past, and I believe we can stick with it. I believe it's a proven system. These socialistic programs that we try to inject don't seem to be working too well, as far as my perspective is concerned.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And Reverend, if you could wrap it up at this point.

Thank you.

MINISTER BRIGHAM: Okay.

So again, from a person who has been there for 18 years among the homeless, among the low income, among the working poor, seeing them on a daily basis, realizing what they need: They're working at a low-wage job; they just need a place that they can afford, without tax subsidies, without government money involvement. Just a small place that they can afford with the income that they have.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And thank you so much. I mean, that's another area I think that calls for another set of hearings -- is the homelessness problem that we have here in New Jersey. I know in Paterson, and Newark, and many other urban hubs, our population of the homeless has increased immensely.

One concern of mine -- and I heard it earlier -- is the amount of homeless veterans who are not getting the services that they deserve. If they can protect our country, we can provide them the medical services and housing. Nobody should have to live in a tent when we have so many vacant properties all over -- be it businesses, be it homes, whatever it may be. But that is like a whole other conversation that we need to have.

So God bless you for the work that you guys do. And I'm glad that people are addressing that there are people out here who still make \$9 an hour, \$12 an hour; and they are a paycheck away -- just like the middle-income we hear about -- a paycheck away from homeless. Well, these people are homeless already with a paycheck.

MINISTER BRIGHAM: That's right.

MS. LANOUE: Right; exactly.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So thank you for your testimony.

MINISTER BRIGHAM: Thank you.

MS. LANOUE: And Mr. Wimberly, if I could add just one more thing.

We spoke with the engineers and the contractors, and these tiny homes would run about \$1 per square foot.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And I'm learning more about the tiny homes that I--

MS. LANOUE: Yes, it's a beautiful thing.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I see. If this can alleviate homelessness in our community, and keep people from sleeping on couches,

and going from relative to relative, you know what? Let's explore that more, and I would support that wholeheartedly.

MS. LANOUE: I truly believe it is the right solution.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes; thank you.

MS. LANOUE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Next we have Kristin McLaughlin.

And Kristin, we apologize. I think we skipped over you before.

K R I S T I N M c L A U G H L I N: That's quite all right; no problem at all.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: But we're glad to have you here.

And we have Triple C Housing; and your handwriting has made it very tough for me to pronounce your name, but you're with Monique Hickson. Monique Hickson, and I want to say *Pincelli* -- and I can't make out the first name -- from Triple C Housing. (no response)

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: (off mike)
They may have left.

MS. BARKER: (off mike) Monique was here; I'll go see if she's in the other room.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Nobody's in the other room.

MS. BARKER: Okay then.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay; all right.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much, Chairman; I appreciate the opportunity to be heard today.

My name is Kristin McLaughlin, and I serve on Hopewell Township's Township Committee.

Hopewell Township is a somewhat rural hometown for approximately 18,000 residents, living in around 6,500 residences in Mercer County.

I'm here today to explain some of the challenges with the current system of allocating affordable housing units in our Township.

First of all, an adversarial court proceeding emptied our affordable housing trust fund, dollars which could have been spent on furthering our goals of creating a more diverse housing stock within our Township.

I would hope that this body could help create a system where the court system and the lawyers are not the main beneficiaries of the hard-earned tax dollars that were meant to support families who want to live in safe communities near their jobs and with good schools for their children.

We are very happy with the section of our agreement that requires every new development in the Township to have a 20 percent set-aside for affordable housing. We firmly believe that the strongest communities are diverse communities. We want our young adults, our single-parent families, our retirees, workers from every section of the pay scale, to be able to live in the community we love.

No matter what you may have heard, Hopewell Township believes that affordable housing is a critical asset for our community.

Part of the challenge, unique to Hopewell Township, is that only 40 percent of our residents live in sewer service areas, and that comprises only 10 percent of our land area. So affordable housing, by

statute, has to be built in a sewer service area. That puts all of our development into the already-dense parts of our Township. So it's just another factor we have to consider as we plan.

Our case was somewhat unique in that we had multiple intervenors. These developers are now our partners in developing affordable housing in the Township. The courts have ruled that 100 percent affordable developments do not give a realistic opportunity for housing, so developers build communities with a mix of market rate and affordable units. In addition, as I have said, we firmly believe that strong communities include as many people from as many backgrounds as possible. So the result of this policy decision is that the number of allotted affordable units needs to be multiplied, usually by 4 or more, to come up with the true number of homes that are going to be built in a community.

In Hopewell Township, after all of our credits were applied, we were assigned a number of 653 new units of affordable housing to be built. When you multiply that by what is our relatively low, negotiated number of 4, you have a total number of 2,600, plus a few, new residences to be built in the Township over the next decade or so.

Hopewell Township will be celebrating its 320th anniversary in the next couple of years. And in only the next decade, we will have to absorb nearly 40 percent growth. The numbers are just too high.

In addition, there is no thought in the current allocation system of what affect this type of growth will have on the school system, emergency services, and other vital aspects of a municipality. I don't think that these are small problems.

We believe that we are doing a great job of planning for these changes; but without a crystal ball, there is no way to know how municipal budgeting will be affected, as these larger numbers of new residents arrive.

Like so many other people who have come before committees, more money would be useful.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: If you could wrap it up at this point.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Yes.

We ask that you consider speed of growth as a component of whatever provisions you create.

Thank you for opening a long-needed discussion on this absolutely critical issue facing every municipality in this great state. In Hopewell Township, we look forward to continuing a dialogue between this body and ourselves as we navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the affordable housing mandate.

Thank you very much for your time everyone.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, and thank you for your patience.

Next we have Robert McNulty, from the Veterans Executive Legislative Action Council; Zachary Bregman, from the Central Jersey Democratic Socialists of America; and Ivory Stancil, Peter Antonellis Towers, East Orange.

ROBERT E. McNULTY, Sr.: Good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Ivory? (no response)

Yes; you can proceed.

MR. McNULTY: Good afternoon.

I want to speak briefly--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Just introduce yourself for us.

MR. McNULTY: Robert E. McNulty, Sr., from the Veterans Executive Legislative Action Council. It's a group of nine veterans' associations here in New Jersey.

We're not doing enough -- when I say *we*, I'm talking about the State Legislature, Governor, everybody involved in this process -- to address these problems with veterans who are experiencing homelessness. And I want to point out there are a couple of bills that I think will share the concern that I have.

We have a Bill, Assembly Bill No. 783, that establishes a grant program for homeless veteran shelters. Although on the face of it, it's a great idea, it's a great concept, the problem is, first of all, this is the third session where this Bill has been introduced. If it's passed, it would take effect immediately. This Bill would require the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to award these grants. Where on earth is the money that goes with this Bill? Because if it got passed next week and went into effect the following week, they would have to take money from some other program to do this. The whole idea of that is ludicrous.

The last two budgets -- we've cut almost \$10 million out of DMAVA funding. And we have a program here that we're going to pass, hopefully, and it will rob Peter to pay Paul. That by itself is not good enough.

So I'm going to ask you to reach out to your colleagues and tell them if we're going to have a grant program, we have to have grant program funding. It's really just that simple. Otherwise, we take from one to pay for

another; somebody somewhere suffers a loss. That's just not getting the job done, not by a long shot.

Another Bill that I'll refer to here is A-2165. This Bill grants credit against business income taxes to developers of rental housing reserved for occupancy by veterans.

That we think is an excellent idea. Of course, it's limited because the savings would go to the people who build the homes, and not to the veterans who would occupy these facilities.

So you're going to give somebody a tax credit to build a home for veterans that the veteran can't afford to move into. You haven't done anything yet, other than awarding somebody to build a building, which may sit empty for some time because you have to keep it for veterans. But the cost is high enough that veterans don't find it affordable. There's plenty of housing in New Jersey. The problem is, affordable housing -- we don't have it.

There's a total of about seven different bills sitting in another Assembly Committee, the Assembly Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee. Some of these go back three years; several go back seven years; a few more go back nine years. So I want to ask, what on earth is the hold up? We have some good legislation; some will require funding from some source. But it's not going anywhere.

Having said that, there are two Bills sitting right here in this Committee; A-2985 -- it authorizes COAH to credit municipalities with 1.5 units of fair share affordable housing for each housing unit occupied by a veteran; and A-2986 does the same thing, basically.

Now, the problem of it is, it's been nine years. The homeless veteran situation is actually trending in the wrong direction. We've been making some great headway, both at the State level and the Federal, up to about 18 months ago, and now we're starting to move in the other direction.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mr. McNulty, I don't think you're going to get an argument from either side of the aisle -- that we have to do better by our veterans; in particular, our homeless veterans. And I think that's just not at our legislative level. But we have to make sure that our Federal representatives are accountable also.

So all of your Bills that you have made mention to, if you could-- Have you submitted your testimony?

MR. McNULTY: I did. Everybody should have received a copy of this (indicates), plus I e-mailed one to everybody.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay; I appreciate that.

MR. McNULTY: So if you didn't get it, well--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: No, no, we've gotten it, but we have gotten a lot of e-mails over the last couple of days.

MR. McNULTY: Oh, I can imagine.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So I appreciate it.

But this will be addressed, Mr. McNulty; and I will look forward to talking to you to make sure some of these Bills are moved when they become -- our veterans and the housing is concerned.

So thank you for your testimony.

MR. McNULTY: Well, New Jersey has a mess of folks, right now, down in Washington, D.C., trying to address this homeless situation. And of course, I couldn't be there and be here, and such.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I'm familiar; I had an opportunity to speak to some of them. And like I said, I think you will get our full support on both sides of the aisle.

MR. McNULTY: You folks won the lottery, and I'm here; and I'm watching, and my colleagues are watching. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Well, there were two, million-dollar tickets in New Jersey. If one of them is mine, we'll talk. (laughter)

MR. McNULTY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: All right; thank you.

All right, sir.

ZACHARY BREGMAN: Hello; my name is Zachary Bregman. I'm a member of the Central Jersey Democratic Socialists of America.

I co-chair our New Brunswick Housing Working Group, which does tenant outreach in New Brunswick. We talk to a lot of local New Brunswick residents about their leases, their housing problems; try to help them any way we can.

I'm here today to talk about the story of one Oneyda Zamora. She is a tenant who lives in New Brunswick; and I think her story really speaks to the condition of working people in the State of New Jersey and, even more specifically, in cities, and how they are coping with the housing that currently exists.

She does not live in affordable housing. She was recently evicted while she was in the hospital with cancer. As she was in the

hospital, fighting for her life, unable to deal with any of her monetary issues, and her two kids were back at home, she was evicted by her landlord, brought to court, and summarily evicted. And this was allowed to go through by the judge; she was locked out of her home as she came back from the hospital. And her kids had to find somewhere to sleep that very night.

What I want to know from this Committee is how that is an acceptable climate for renters in New Jersey? Because during my time at our tenant outreach, this is a very indicative type of example of the condition of people who live in New Brunswick; and in addition to all sorts of other issues, such as landlords failing in their maintenance responsibilities; all sorts of issues.

This is true as there is affordable housing in New Brunswick, but not nearly enough. The waiting list is miles long, and there are tons of issues there as well. And I hear a lot of the mayors of the cities and municipalities of New Jersey today speaking about how we need to put a moratorium, or slow down affordable housing in the State of New Jersey. And you know, that really just seems like such a disgrace to people like Oneyda, who are struggling to get by -- to hear about how we need to put a cap on affordable housing. Instead of asking for funds for be able to accommodate more affordable housing, they say move the affordable housing somewhere else. But every single speaker made sure to preface their statement with how much they support affordable housing themselves.

So what I would like to ask this Committee is, you know, what are you going to do to try and increase affordable housing so that people like Oneyda can afford to live in a home without the precarity (*sic*) that

she's facing right now, and that so many people in New Jersey are facing right now?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Well, we appreciate your testimony. And like I said, this is a hearing for affordable housing. We are very compassionate to your particular situation that you addressed. And this is something that we want to hear your input.

So anything -- according to that, we don't want anybody homeless, we don't want anybody to be in that situation. But the renter-tenant issue is another issue that we will address in the future.

MR. BREGMAN: Absolutely; that's great.

So is there any commitment on this Committee to try and make an independent government organization that will be responsible for meeting the original Mount Laurel specifications for affordable housing; or is it just going to remain in the courts as it is now?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: That's why we're here today.

MR. BREGMAN: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So we are committed to that.

MR. BREGMAN: All right; thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

Next we have Mark McCarthy of Warren, New Jersey; Dierdre Glenn Paul; and Maria Alberto.

Ms. Paul.

DIERDRE GLENN PAUL, Ph.D.: Okay.

For the sake of keeping my remarks cogent, I'm going to pretty much stick to the testimony that I prepared.

So I'll start by saying good afternoon, Assemblyman Wimberly. Thank you for convening this legislative hearing. And Assemblyman Bramnick, thank you for making me aware of it.

I am Dr. Dierdre Paul, a resident of Englewood's 4th Ward. Englewood's 4th Ward is predominantly African American and has a rich history. Most 4th Ward residents have deep ties to the community; some of them date back more than a century. The majority of residents are working class, middle class, and committed to remaining in Englewood. Thus they are actually clamoring for more affordable housing in Englewood, and evenly distributed throughout the city.

Recently, however, there has been a concerted effort to seemingly push longstanding 4th Ward residents out of Englewood, change the complexion of the Ward, as well as its voting pattern.

In the span of approximately 11 years, there have been two luxury apartment complexes built in the 4th Ward. Towne Centre, the first, was opened in 2007, with 188 units. Rent starts at approximately \$2,120. In June 2018, One William luxury apartments opened around the corner from Towne Centre. It has 185 units, and rentals start at \$2,310. Presently, there is a Planning Board request to build a 220-unit luxury apartment building approximately two blocks from the other two.

When the architect presented at the most recent Planning Board meeting, he cited an inaccurate traffic study that greatly underestimated the amount of new traffic that would be generated by the more than 220 residents they would be adding to this already heavily congested area. Further, he admitted that he failed to include the traffic

resulting from the most recent opening of One William in his traffic calculations.

He talked a lot about sewage plans, water drainage systems, and traffic studies; but he failed to include people, including the small, black-owned restaurant that the developer displaced.

So at this point in time, we're concerned about a couple of things.

We're concerned, number one, about this spate of overdevelopment and its impact. We don't want to see Englewood become the next gentrified Harlem or Washington D.C.

So we view this overdevelopment occurring in the 4th Ward of Englewood to be violative of the spirit and intent of the State statute referred to as the *Municipal Land Use Law*. We highlight two provisions featured within the law's purpose: To promote the establishment of appropriate population densities; and to promote the conservation of historic sites and districts. That's the second.

You asked for solutions as well. So, in closing, our solution is the following: Adhere to the law. And the other one is to put a moratorium on pilot agreements and tax abatements for developers because in many respects they no longer add to the value of the community in any way; and instead, detract.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you very much; thank you, Dr. Paul. (applause)

M A R K M c C A R T H Y: My name is Mark McCarthy. I'm a Warren Township resident; that's in Somerset County, New Jersey.

I'm not used to speaking into a microphone.

I am probably just going to echo a lot of the previous comments that people have made.

I own property that's adjacent to a proposed 80-unit low- and moderate-income rental unit that is being done by my town. The communication with the town is very difficult due to the way these things are being negotiated in the courts. And I think that is a very significant thing that this Committee should try to address immediately. It's been mentioned countless times, so I don't think -- I think we all know why that is. It's the numbers that the courts -- they're not public knowledge of how the negotiations go, and they seem to be arbitrarily being decided.

The current method, also, of the towns negotiating independently with each other, as opposed to some kind of regional county or other method, just seems so ripe for a disaster to occur where my town, in particular, has shared services. So a shared high school says they negotiate one number; neighboring towns that share the high school negotiate other numbers; now the school is over capacity.

There is no weight given to the cost of these things. I don't -- I find it inconceivable that there is no check and balance in the system that would require either the township itself doing these, let alone the counties, or the roads, or the other infrastructure that is affected by the combined effect of these projects -- to be discussed before these projects occur. It seems nonsensical to everyone who I discuss it with, and I would hope the Committee agrees with that. And getting the courts out of that and getting this back into the State would be a good first step.

The previous speaker mentioned, also, about traffic studies. When the developer presented to my Planning Board, the thoroughness of the studies done and the traffic studies were also very nonsensical -- unless it was going to increase the numbers by 100. So they're going to make a new development, that's basically on a dead-end street, that didn't meet the standards that would have to be done by any kind of traffic study.

So it's obviously, percentage-wise, you're talking about, you know, a 1,000 percent increase in traffic. With testimony from the police and school board for sidewalks going in, and other things happening; and it's just completely ignored by the Planning Boards, because they're frankly being bullied by these court-issued settlements. And then that bullying is then passed down to the citizens and the residents of the townships -- they're being told they have to accept these agreements. And it is inconceivable.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: If you could wrap up.

MR. McCARTHY: Lastly, I'm going to ask you a question. Do you know if Warren Township has submitted any written testimony? I don't know if that's something that's here.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I could check with OLS to see if Warren Township has submitted anything.

We could get back to you--

MR. McCARTHY: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: If you step out, we'll get somebody to you.

MR. McCARTHY: And also, if I didn't do it at the beginning, I'd like to thank the Committee. This is a terrific hearing, and I think it's a great first step. I wish it had happened over a year ago, though.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

MR. McCARTHY: Better late than never.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We appreciate your testimony.

Thank you.

Next we have Linda Geevers; Dan Antonellis; and Jerome Shepherd. We can have all three come forward.

Linda Geevers, Dan Antonellis, and Jerome Shepherd.

Just introduce yourself.

L I N D A G E E V E R S: Thank you.

My name is Linda Geevers. I am currently serving on the West Windsor Township Council, since 2005. Prior to that, I served on the West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District for six years. I'm also a Planning Board member.

West Windsor Township is a diverse, inclusive community, and we are a leader in affordable housing. We welcome everyone.

However, so that no township is overwhelmed with the explosive growth, the Legislature needs to clearly define rules and formulas for the third round obligations and beyond.

Suggestion number 1: Reinstate the Council on Affordable Housing, or rename it as another group that is charged with developing rules. Local governments need clarity in law as to how affordable housing obligations are to be determined. Judges should not be asked to legislate

from the bench. The Governor and State Legislature must determine the obligations after careful consideration, including fiscal tax impacts on communities.

Suggestion number 2: Make it clear, through legislation, that third round obligations for an individual township is capped at 1,000 units. The third round ends in just 2025. It can take years for those projects to be completed, as many of you know. West Windsor has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on trying to figure out what our obligation should be and where it should go. West Windsor's obligation, through the courts, is 1,500 units, and we consider that excessive; we're challenging it. And if it is 1,500 units, there's no doubt that our taxes will skyrocket. They are skyrocketing now.

Suggestion 3: Explosive growth brings in more school children. West Windsor will have a \$115 million referendum on the ballot this fall; much of it is for school additions. We haven't even gotten to needing new schools, but we are at that breaking point right now -- right now.

And so what we need is an appropriate level of school funding for the explosive growth that we are taking on now. We can't wait until 2025 to get what we should be getting, which should be millions of dollars more. We need to get it now. It's something they have to work on; and I know this whole school funding formula has been in the newspaper this summer; a decision was made; 2025 is seven years out. And we're building inclusive developments -- I just approved one in West Windsor Township -- 443 units with a 20 percent set-aside. And we're going to give special treatment for veterans too; it's a new program that is allowed by the

statutes. So we're trying to do what we can to accommodate all sorts of affordable housing needs.

So in conclusion, with all these points-- And also *requalification* I don't believe has been mentioned by anyone, because at some point, you've all funded affordable housing. But three, four, five, six years down the road, and they can double the income. Which is great; they're moving on, they're getting promotions in their new career. But yet, they still in that unit. So I think that's something that has to be looked at. And also preservation -- we do have some litigation that's being resolved, over after 30 years; and the builders obviously want to make more units. But we protected ourselves with an ordinance that says it's up to the township that they remain or not. And of course, we want those affordable units to remain as affordable.

So I thank you. I know it's been a long time listening to (indiscernible). I appreciate that.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Well, I thank you, even though it's late in the hour. You had some outstanding points that we will look at. In particular, you know, the school funding piece is a whole other piece. I know many communities are getting an influx of young people, and people from all over the country. And yet those classrooms, and building spaces, and the amount of teachers, and student-teacher ratios are something that we have to look at.

So thank you very much.

MS. GEEVERS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: At this point, we are down to our last speaker -- unless I missed anyone -- Carinne Murphy, constituent.

Carinne Murphy.

If we have missed you, you can see a staff member; just come forward.

I know we called some people who did not come in earlier, maybe because they were in the overflow room or stepped away. So if we did miss anybody, please come forward now.

C A R I N N E M U R P H Y: Hello.

I want to thank the Committee for allowing me to testify today.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Could we just have your name for the record?

MS. MURPHY: Yes. My name is Carinne Murphy, and I live in Bergen County.

Again, I want to thank you all for having me come today and testify.

Again, I live in District 39, which is made up of boroughs in Bergen County and Passaic County. I personally live in the Borough of Park Ridge.

I just want to mention that the median home price in Bergen, in 2015, was \$532,000; I'm rounding. In Passaic County, in 2015, it was \$330,000. Home prices, in my opinion, are high in Bergen County.

The taxes in Bergen County are currently -- this is median average -- \$11,300; and it is rising. My taxes have increased drastically over the last 12 years.

I also want to say that there is food stamp use in District 39; it's at 2.5 percent. My own Borough, where I live, it's actually at 3 percent; and we have a community food bank that is constantly empty. And I help get food to put it back in.

The median age in Bergen County, in 2017 -- the median age is 54; the next largest group is age 59, and the next group is age 14.

With my time living in Bergen County, and what I'm seeing here, is that people are aging and will need to move out of their homes in Bergen County. Young people cannot afford these homes; they cannot afford to move in. In my Borough, and in my local community, we definitely need affordable housing.

Several Bergen County boroughs, including my own, are in litigation. The residents do not want affordable housing for a multitude of reasons; and it's very unfortunate because we need it.

I have a multicultural family. Again, I live in Bergen County. My children do not fit in there. I just wanted to read some quick statistics.

In District 39, Caucasians make up 82 percent -- I'm rounding; Asians, 13 percent; Hispanics and Latinos, 7.6 percent; and African Americans, 1.5 percent.

I do want to mention the median household income in Bergen County. Overall, the average is \$106,000 a year. The Asian population makes up \$112,000; the Caucasians make up \$106,000; Hispanics make up \$95,000; and African Americans make up \$71,000, out of that population in District 39.

As I mentioned before, the average household-- Just to buy a house in my District is \$532,000.

We have a working poor in Bergen County, and residents in different towns and the elected leaders are fighting -- they are now fighting in court saying that they don't have the resources, they don't have the layout to provide this affordable housing.

People are going to end up homeless; it's a true problem. And I'm hoping this Committee will really look at everything and try to find ways so that people, like myself and others, can remain in Bergen County and remain in the State of New Jersey, quite honestly.

I appreciate your time, and thank you so much for having me.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you for your testimony. We appreciate it.

We had with us today Elaine Mann, a resident of Colts Neck, no need to testify; David Mann, Colts Neck, no need to testify; Clara Gonzalez, from Warren, no need to testify.

At this time I believe we have wrapped up, and we've heard from every speaker. We've kept this below 2 p.m., which was my goal.

And at this time I will give courtesy to all of my colleagues, if they have a brief closing statement, because we plan on having at least three more hearings before 2019. I'm looking to September-October for our next hearing, which will be in Union County, and then we will move throughout the state.

Vice Chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHAPARRO: I'll make this very quick.

This was very informative. I'm glad that we took the first step. And we have a lot of work to do, clearly, and we need to just listen; and we are going to disagree. But I do believe that there's an outcome, a solution

that we can just, kind of, work together and work towards. And our goal is the human issues, and that's what's important. And we need to make sure it works. Things look pretty on paper, but we do need to make sure that things work; all the dynamics are there. And I'm looking forward to working with all of you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Vice Chair.

Assemblywoman Jackson.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Yes; I want to thank everyone for coming out today.

I've heard a lot of great testimony; and it definitely puts it all in perspective: How do we manage each town individually? This isn't a cookie-cutter type of situation; we do need long-term planning. There are a lot of solutions so that we can all ensure affordable housing exists in every town, as it should be.

And it's just all about planning, and how do we do that? How do we address the transportation, the infrastructure, the school districts? This is a multi-layered problem that we have, and this is just the first step to addressing that.

So I look forward to continuing the conversation and developing a policy that we can all live by and all participate in.

So thank you very much for starting the conversation.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

Assemblywoman Speight.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SPEIGHT: Thank you, Chairman; thank you for holding this meeting.

This was very informative for myself. Thank you, community, for coming out.

One of the main issues for me, and I've experienced it actually this year -- people are suffering from housing issues, and our children's education is affected by this. As I know that in my community, in Newark and in Belleville, our children move from school to school because our parents can't afford to stay in one location. Marriages are being broken up; families are being broken; people's health is at risk -- all because their homes are broken. And when your home is broken -- your house is your place of peace. And at the end of the day, with everything that's going on in life, when you go home that's your place of peace. So if you can't go home to a place of peace because your house might have a foreclosure, or you might be evicted, guess what? People are committing suicide. So if we can't get this issue under control, people might lose their lives; children's education is at risk.

So this is one of the most important issues that we have to deal with today.

So thank you, Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Schepisi.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Once again, thank you for having the courage to put this forward, listening to people.

It's an incredibly complicated issue; and it's not something that's going to be resolved in one meeting, two meetings, or even three. But we need to take those first steps.

And I think that what we heard from everybody today, while they may be coming from it from different angles, there's a grave concern about affordability in this state. There is a desire amongst different political parties, different regions, to come together and try to come up with a better way than what we've been doing.

And I speak for myself on this, but we've made things so complicated that whether or not we're trying to build affordable housing for those with special needs, or veterans, or seniors, we've almost made it impossible for our nonprofits to do it because of the layers of regulation that we've put in, and the lack of funding.

We spoke about -- Kevin Walsh testified to communities had a \$160-some-odd million and didn't spend it. Well, right now, that would only get our state approximately 641 units of affordable housing. And that's nowhere near the numbers that even one community is being told that they have to build.

So it's something where -- this is a first step; we need to all think outside of the box. Let's look at different ways of doing this -- a combination of new built, in a smart way, on a statewide type of thing; renovations; using public-private partnerships for these foreclosed homes and enabling people who may not want to just live in an apartment or a condo to live in a house, and to raise their families in a house.

So I owe a lot of people lunches after today. (laughter) I bet a lot of the mayors who came would never think that they would come and testify, begging for COAH to be reinstated. But that's where we are, and I thank you for doing this.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN CLIFTON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you for holding this.

Like I said earlier, in my original opening statement, I've been on this Committee since 2012, and this is the first real discussion we've had about this.

And I want to thank all the speakers for coming. But there are going to be compromises and differences of opinion as we get to that goal. But if we work together, I think we can get there.

So thank you, and I look forward to your leadership on this.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

At this time, we're, like I said -- we appreciate everybody coming out. We will -- my goal is to have four hearings before December.

We thank Minority Leader Bramnick for sitting in with us today. And obviously, when you have such leadership coming forward to sit on a Committee, you know this is an issue that we need to address.

So once again, on behalf of the Committee and myself, we thank you for coming today.

Thank you.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)