

Housing and  
Community Development  
**Network** of New Jersey



*FROM THE DESK OF DIANE STERNER*

September 2008

Dear Members and Friends of the Network,

For many years, Network leaders, members and allies have worked to secure a comprehensive response to the state's relentless affordable housing crisis. We are very pleased about the significant step forward we took together recently with the passage of A.500/S.1783. The act is the most far-reaching housing bill enacted in New Jersey in many years, and includes a number of policy priorities that the Network has promoted to step up the production of affordable housing and ensure that more New Jerseyans can obtain decent homes they can afford.

As one of the strong supporters of this effort, the Network is very concerned about claims being made by some about the effect of this legislation on New Jersey's local governments. We are sending the attached "Frequently Asked Questions about A.500/S.1783 and the COAH Third Round rules" piece to members of the community development sector, social justice advocates and other friends, in the hope of both dispelling these myths and providing you with strong counter-arguments you can use to address them as these issues arise in your work.

At the same time, we have to be aware that New Jersey's local governments are facing complex issues, not so much as a result of A.500/S.1783 itself, but as a result of the interplay between that bill, the new COAH third round rules, and the current economic and housing market slump. By challenging many of the myths and claims that are circulating, we are not suggesting that the existing situation is without problems, and that changes are not needed. In fact, the last question in the attached FAQ deals specifically with some key changes that we feel are needed to help New Jersey's local governments better address their affordable housing obligations.

Despite these problems, the legislation represents a major watershed moment for the affordable housing and community development sector and our partners. I hope you find the attached information useful, and I welcome your feedback and comments as we move towards the implementation of A.500/S.1783 and towards solving the state's housing crisis.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane Sterner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Diane Sterner

Executive Director