

CHAPTER 55

AN ACT creating a Joint Committee on Housing Affordability to provide oversight of housing availability in the State and supplementing Title 52 of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

C.52:9RR-1 Findings, declarations relative to housing affordability.

1. The Legislature finds and declares:

a. It has been more than twenty years since the Legislature enacted the "Fair Housing Act," P.L.1985, c.222 (C.52:27D-301 et al.) which provides a voluntary system for municipalities to follow in zoning for affordable housing. Since the time of the enactment of this law, there has not been a unified review by the Legislature of the administration of the "Fair Housing Act," or a review of the issue of housing availability and affordability in general.

b. Soaring housing prices, escalating property taxes, increasing municipal fees, rising energy costs, and the costs to implement various State rules and regulations have put housing out of the reach of many citizens, particularly senior citizens on fixed incomes.

c. Available land to develop is rapidly dwindling, causing many experts to predict that New Jersey will be "built-out" by the end of the next decade. New Jersey currently is the most densely populated State in the nation.

d. Conflicting public policies on land use and planning have resulted in a lack of a coordinated approach by the State in addressing the issues that relate to the availability of decent, affordable housing for both home buyers and renters.

e. There is a need for continued, integrated oversight by the Legislature to review and shape solutions to address the State's residents' housing needs, and to address the Legislature's responsibility for the "Fair Housing Act" as an alternative to the court's remedies granted under the *Mount Laurel* doctrine.

C.52:9RR-2 "Joint Committee on Housing Affordability."

2. There is hereby created a committee to be known as the "Joint Committee on Housing Affordability." The committee shall consist of five members of the Senate, including two members of the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee, or its successor, to be appointed by the President of the Senate and five members of the General Assembly, including two members of the Assembly Housing and Local Government Committee, or its successor, to be appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly. No more than three of the members from each House shall be of the same political party. All members shall serve without compensation and vacancies in the membership of the committee shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments are made.

C.52:9RR-3 Chairman, vice chairman, secretary.

3. The committee shall select a chairman and vice chairman from among its members and a secretary who need not be a member of the committee.

C.52:9RR-4 Powers, duties of committee.

4. The committee is authorized, empowered and directed to conduct a continuing study of the availability and provision of housing affordable to all New Jersey households, the financing and administration of programs providing affordable housing, the rules, regulations or actions promulgated or enforced by various State government entities, including but not limited to, departments, boards, bureaus, commissions, or agencies, that may negatively

impact the affordability of housing, and land use policies and other issues related to making housing affordable, for the purpose of making recommendations for legislative action, including amendments to the "Fair Housing Act," P.L.1985, c.222 (C.52:27D-301 et al.) or to the "State Planning Act," P.L.1985, c.398 (C.52:18A-196 et al.), or to any other statute as it deems practicable and desirable for the provision of opportunities for the affordability and availability of housing for all residents throughout the State.

C.52:9RR-5 Review of introduced bills by committee; housing affordability impact notes.

5. The staff of the Joint Committee shall review all bills introduced into both houses each Legislative session for identification of those bills which will clearly have a significant impact upon the cost, availability, or affordability of housing in New Jersey. A list of those bills so identified shall be prepared, and thereafter a statement to the sponsor and the chairman of the committee, if any, to which a bill on the list was referred, or to the presiding officer of the House in which the bill originated if no such reference was made, shall be sent by the Joint Committee Staff indicating that a housing affordability impact note is required. An impact note for each bill on the list shall thereafter be completed by the Joint Committee as soon as practicable, unless a request to expedite the preparation of an impact note is made by the bill's sponsor. If there is insufficient information to prepare a reliable estimate of the anticipated impact, a statement to that effect may be filed and shall meet the requirements of this section. The Legislative Budget and Finance Officer and the Office of Legislative Services shall provide such assistance as may be requested by the Joint Committee in the preparation of the housing affordability impact note.

C.52:9RR-6 Services available to the committee.

6. The committee shall be entitled to call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of the Legislative Services Commission, as well as employees of any other State, county or municipal department, board, bureau, commission or agency as it may require and as may be available to it for its purposes, and to employ such professional, stenographic and clerical assistants and incur such traveling and other miscellaneous expenses as it may deem necessary, in order to perform its duties, and as may be within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to it for those purposes.

C.52:9RR-7 Meetings, hearings.

7. The committee may meet and hold hearings at such place or places as it shall designate during the sessions or recesses of the Legislature and shall make an annual report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature, and may make other reports or recommendations as it deems necessary or desirable.

8. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved March 15, 2007.