



TESTIMONY

**Testimony on S50
Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee
January 25, 2024**

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Chair Singleton and members of the Committee:

My name is Peter Kasabach, and I am the Executive Director of New Jersey Future, a nonprofit organization that promotes sensible and equitable growth, redevelopment, and infrastructure investments to foster healthy, strong, resilient communities.

We appreciate you taking the initiative to advance this important bill that lays the foundation for how municipal affordable housing obligations will be determined and, equally important, how they will be met. We fully support bill S50 being passed early in this new legislative session.

We support codifying the Mercer County-Jacobson methodology as the standard for determining municipal obligations. We understand that there may be some concerns about minor issues with the methodology, which should certainly be reviewed. However, it is important to keep the big picture in mind. Any proposed formula represents a minimum obligation number for the state, which by all accounts is still far short of how much affordable housing the state actually needs. We urge you to ensure that any changes to the formula do not reduce the overall statewide obligation. Allocations between municipalities will always be questioned. We also urge you to remind municipalities that these are minimums, not maximums, and that with good planning, affordable housing will be a community asset and should exceed the minimum obligation numbers.

We agree that giving the job of generating initial obligation numbers to the Department of Community Affairs is a positive step forward. We support the elimination of COAH and the accountability and enforcement structure being promoted in the bill.

We think the State has an important opportunity to not only help towns streamline the process and reduce costs but to ensure better-planned housing that will foster stronger, healthier, fairer, and more resilient communities.

We appreciate how redevelopment has been highlighted throughout the bill and encourage you to maintain and possibly even strengthen this focus. The increased amount of time for municipalities to plan, from the time the numbers are published, is welcomed.

We strongly encourage you to continue to elevate land use and housing planning in this bill to ensure municipalities are given the guidance, resources, and time they need to plan where and how they will meet their obligations while redeveloping and improving their communities. We will be recommending some simple updates to the bill to emphasize that the planning process and outcomes are as important as the determination of need. These planning recommendations are consistent with the intent of the Fair Housing Act that calls for comprehensive planning, and was adopted in tandem with the State Planning Act, which describes where and how communities should grow and develop in accordance with smart growth principles. This approach will modernize the Fair Housing Act to reflect the realities of today's real estate market, new threats from climate change, and the importance of redeveloping our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on this important issue.

Peter Kasabach

Executive Director,
New Jersey Future