



## TESTIMONY

### Testimony on S1786: Accessory Dwelling Units Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee May 11, 2026

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Chair Singleton, Vice Chair Stack, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **S1786**, a bill that would allow for the development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in more parts of New Jersey. My name is Helen Kioukis, and I am the Policy Manager at New Jersey Future, a nonpartisan organization that advocates for smart, sustainable growth and serves as the convener of the Great Homes and Neighborhoods for All initiative: a statewide pro-housing initiative working to ensure that all New Jersey residents can find an affordable home in a safe, vibrant, and inclusive neighborhood.

We are in strong support of legislation that would permit more New Jersey residents to build accessory dwelling units on their property. ADUs—also referred to as in-law suites, backyard cottages, or garage apartments—create more housing opportunities in an incremental way that supports modest growth without large-scale development or infrastructure strain. Allowing for the development of these smaller types of homes is another tool we need to address New Jersey’s growing housing crisis and provide additional affordable housing options for residents of all ages and stages of life.

ADUs can benefit older residents who want to downsize but remain in their community, people caring for an aging parent or an older child with a disability, young adults just starting out, or essential workers who want to live closer to their jobs. However, while several New Jersey municipalities have taken proactive steps to include ADUs as part of their broader housing strategy, most residents don’t have this option because building an ADU is illegal in the majority of New Jersey towns.

Instead of waiting for all 564 municipalities to take action, the Legislature can remove barriers to ADUs and facilitate their development through a streamlined administrative process, with clear and consistent rules. According to the Mercatus Center at George Washington University, “legalizing accessory dwelling units has been the most common action state policymakers have taken to make more lower-cost housing feasible to build;” and 18 states have passed laws to allow homeowners to build ADUs, as of August 2025.

Our state-level housing issues require comprehensive, state-level solutions. ADUs would expand affordable housing options on a larger scale, support multigenerational living, and enhance community resilience. We urge members of the Legislature to take action and support this solution already working well across other parts of the country. As more and more New Jerseyans struggle to find a home that meets their needs and their budgets, we should welcome accessory dwelling units into our neighborhoods.

Thank you, Chairman Singleton for sponsoring New Jersey’s ADU bill and for your leadership on advancing additional housing reforms to build more homes and improve housing choices across NJ.