



**Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee Testimony on S50  
Thursday, January 24, 2024**

Good morning, Chairman Singleton and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on bill S50, the landmark Mount Laurel decision and how we determine affordable housing obligations in NJ.

My name is Matthew Hersh, director of policy and advocacy at the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey. I am proud to represent nearly 300 community development corporations, individuals and other organizations that support the creation of affordable homes, economic opportunities, and strong communities. The Network is also the state's largest, funded HUD-certified housing counseling intermediary serving NJ exclusively.

We are glad to be here today to support this proposed framework for solving NJ's relentless affordability crisis. It's important to remember that the court process currently in operation was established in 2015 after Gov. Christie promised to "gut" the Council on Affordable Housing. Despite that attempt to dismantle the state's affordable housing mechanisms, the ensuing years have seen the state taking important actions to make sure towns live up to their housing obligations while using a universally accepted methodology that will continue with this important legislation.

Since that time, our nonprofit developer members have worked hand-in-hand with municipalities to create inclusive, integrated approaches to housing. This new, proposed framework bolsters these partnerships by creating more transparency in reporting to DCA, more opportunities to preserve and transform existing housing, strengthens deed restriction reporting so towns are not finding themselves on the hamster wheel of creating more homes while losing others, and gives towns the opportunity to think broadly and creatively about a diverse housing stock.

Up to now, determining municipal fair share obligations in the courts has resulted in the best, most efficient execution of affordable home development since *Mount Laurel*. That is the result of some basic principles: ending the concentration of poverty; providing an adequate number of homes to serve our lowest-income earners, regardless of what town they live in; ensuring the stability necessary for families, and particularly Black and Brown families, to have the ability to generate wealth.

We look forward to this new framework working to address the more than [200,000-rental-home shortage](#) for extremely low-income renters statewide, stopping evictions and foreclosures and making sure everyone has access to home ownership.

Let's use this historic moment so that we can *HouseNJ*.