

Policy Update: Don't Let the Assembly Leave Us Out in the Cold

One of our key policy priorities this lame duck session is strengthening the New Jersey's Code Blue laws, which are vital to providing shelter services for our state's homeless population and for residents in need during the coldest days of the winter.

The state's guidelines are currently ambiguous but two bills headed to the Assembly Chambers on Monday, January 13, aim to clarify protocol and provide necessary guidance for counties as they shelter residents in need during the coldest months of the year.

- [A6056](#) is a bipartisan effort that requires a Code Blue alert when the temperature hits 32 degrees or lower. This ensures shelter for nearly 10,000 New Jersey residents during the coldest months of the year. And more, it ensures shelter options for countless New Jerseyans whose heat is not functioning in their residences.
- [A5298](#) will enable the state's Health Commissioner to establish guidelines for health care and social services offered to at-risk individuals at emergency warming centers during a Code Blue alert.

Both bills cleared the full Senate in 2019 with overwhelming, bipartisan support and now need to pass the Assembly next week before going to Gov. Murphy's desk for his signature!

TAKE ACTION NOW! Let's get this common sense law passed so no one is left out in the cold. [Contact your legislator TODAY](#) and tell them to vote YES on A6056 and A5298!

Despite a very busy lame duck legislative session, the Network kept a steady advocacy hand as we continue to work with our friends in the community development field and legislative allies to notch several key legislative victories borne out of our policy priorities.

Ensuring an Equitable, Sustainable Sandy Recovery

[A4529/S3191](#): This bill cleared the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee last week and provides less burdensome ways for Superstorm Sandy victims to prove contractor fraud in order to access reimbursement funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Getting this bill through is a huge step in helping Sandy Survivors to recover from the storm and move forward.

Previously, victims would have to file a DCA-produced document that showed that the victim's contractor had been charged with a crime involved theft or fraud. Under this new bill, DCA is required to distribute fraud-response funding without the DCA document, as long as the victim can provide alternative documentation that shows fraud or theft occurred. The bill directs DCA to consult with the Division of Consumer Affairs to develop appropriate standards for determining whether fraud or theft by deception has occurred, and what documents are relevant in that determination.

Reduce the Impact of Foreclosures and Address Problem Properties

[A5084/S1155](#): This bill requires the party responsible for a vacant and abandoned property to register the property with the municipality in which the property is located. The bill would also provide enforcement tools to help ensure that these properties are properly maintained. This is a bill that has been part of the Networks proposed legislation that provides communities increased tools available to them to address these problem properties. The bill passed the full Senate and Assembly and now awaits Gov. Murphy's signature!

Establishing a New Jersey Eviction Crisis Task Force

[A4517/S4341](#): The majority of poor renting families in America spend over half of their income on housing costs, and eviction can have a catastrophic impact on their lives. Research has shown that the most vulnerable members of our communities are at the highest risk of eviction. This includes low-income women (especially poor women of color), domestic violence victims, and families with children.

This bill will establish a 23-member task force, of which the Network will be a member, to study recent trends in eviction actions against New Jerseyans, identify the impact of evictions on renters, landlords, and local governments, and make recommendations for legislation. We look forward to working with our community development and legislative allies to find real solutions to an issue that plagues our communities.