

Network Applauds Decision to Uphold Fair Housing Act □

Superior Court Rejects Christie COAH Reorganization

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Following the announcement that the Superior Court's Appellate Division has ruled against Governor Christie's reorganization of the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) under the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey Director of Policy and Advocacy Staci Berger issued the following statement:

"We are heartened by the Court's decision to uphold the Fair Housing Act by rejecting the governor's attempt to gut COAH and silence the voices of nonprofit and special needs developers. The Governor's plan added uncertainty and chaos to our struggling housing market, instead of providing opportunities to stabilize and balance it. We're optimistic that now we can move forward and work towards creating the affordable homes New Jersey residents and our economy so desperately need.

"The state's economy is fragile, making this is a critical time to make careful decisions that will support the recovery and position us for increased opportunity. Creating more jobs means making it easier for employers to recruit and maintain good workers. New Jersey can, and must, act to improve and stabilize its housing affordability and variety across the state. A first step is to transform foreclosures and blighted properties that are holding us back into positive assets. We hope the Court's strong rebuke to the Governor's COAH plan will encourage him to rethink his attempt to usurp \$300 million in municipal housing trust funds and federal foreclosure resources to balance the budget and use that money for its intended purpose."

The COAH reorganization plan was proposed on June 29, 2011 and went into effect 60 days later. The plan was immediately appealed by the Fair Share Housing Center, and the Appellate Division accelerated its briefing and argument in view of the public interest nature of the matter.

In January, the Network along with the Corporation for Supportive Housing and the Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness worked with Attorney Henry L. Kent-Smith of Fox Rothschild LLP to file an amicus brief supporting a challenge to the COAH reorganization.

"The Court's ruling will have a positive impact on the development of housing that NJ's special needs and homeless citizens can afford and reiterates what advocates have been saying... that our governor overstepped his authority in abolishing COAH," said Alison Recca-Ryan, director of the Corporation of Supportive Housing of New Jersey.

To read the decision in full, visit <http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/opinions/a6301-10.pdf> . To learn more about the Network, visit www.hcdnnj.org

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