Up for Growth Action

1627 Eye Street NW, Suite 1130

Washington, DC 20006

June 4, 2024

The Honorable John Fetterman The Honorable Lisa Blunt Rochester

142 Russell Senate Office Building 1724 Longworth House Office Building

United States Senate United States House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Fetterman and Representative Blunt Rochester:

Our organizations write to express strong support for the *Reducing Regulatory Barriers to Housing Act of 2024*. This bipartisan legislation is essential for empowering communities that seek to expand affordable housing options by providing expert guidance and critical resources to support their unique housing challenges. We applaud you for your continued leadership on this issue and encourage you to work with your colleagues to ensure its passage.

The United States suffers from a severe housing shortage and affordability crisis. According to Up for Growth’s research, as of 2022, the U.S. is 3.9 million homes short of meeting housing needs. The nation's housing deficit has led to a sharp increase in rental expenses for families. While roughly half of all renter households in the United States are burdened by housing costs, spending more than thirty percent of their income on housing, three-quarters of America’s lowest-income renters are severely cost-burdened, spending more than half of their income on housing. Young people and middle-income earners are struggling to become homeowners, and homelessness has increased to its highest level on record. These trends not only reflect inadequate housing opportunities but also pose significant societal and economic risks.

Overly burdensome state and local regulations prevent market-rate and affordable homes from being built, restricting housing supply and driving up housing costs for all households. While state and local governments are in the best position to address zoning and land use reforms, the federal government can help support these efforts.

The Reducing Regulatory Barriers to Housing Act aims to address these challenges by spurring development in communities striving to rebalance their housing markets. It would do so by creating capacity at the federal level to aggregate best practices and create incentives for land use policies proven to increase housing supply.

The legislation would empower HUD’s Office of Policy Development & Research to aggregate and offer expertise, coordinate federal housing efforts, and provide research, model ordinances, and best practices to streamline land use policies that will catalyze new housing creation that can meet the specific needs of each community. The legislation also creates incentives to collaborate more effectively on regional planning efforts, address cross-jurisdiction issues, and promote consistency in land use practices through the creation of a standardized national zoning resource. By adopting common data standards and sharing land use information, states and localities can improve decision-making.

Combined, these efforts could boost data-driven decision-making, offer critical support to ensure any housing reforms achieve intended outcomes, and allow communities to advocate for policies that align with their own needs and priorities.

Zoning and land use reform must be a critical part of any comprehensive solution to the nation’s housing crisis, however, it is important to note that it is not sufficient on its own to address the full breadth of America’s housing needs. Zoning reforms are particularly helpful for increasing the supply of homes affordable to low-to-middle-income households. Significant federal investments are also needed to address the housing needs of those with the lowest incomes who often cannot be served by the private sector without public subsidies.

The Reducing Regulatory Barriers to Housing Act is a smart and bipartisan solution needed to improve quality of life for millions of people. Its passage will empower communities across the country to enable more housing for all people. Thank you again for your diligence on this critical legislation, and we look forward to working with you to pass it.

Sincerely,

American Planning Association (APA)

Coalition for Home Repair (formerly ReFrame)

Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU)

Council for Affordable and Rural Housing (CARH)

Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA)

Enterprise Community Partners

Grounded Solutions Network

Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI)

Housing Assistance Council (HAC)

Leading Builders of America

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

LOCUS: Responsible Real Estate Developers and Investors

National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA)

National Apartment Association (NAA)

National Association of Affordable Housing Lenders (NAAHL)

National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals (NAHREP)

National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO)

National Association of Residential Property Managers (NARPM)

National Community Stabilization Trust (NCST)

National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA)

National Housing Conference (NHC)

National Housing Trust (NHT)

National Leased Housing Association (NLHA)

National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)

National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC)

National NeighborWorks Association (NNA)

National Rental Home Council

National Urban League (NUL)

Prosperity Now

Smart Growth America

UnidosUS

Up for Growth

YIMBY Action