

To: Delaware General Assembly

From: Developmental Disabilities Council

RE: H.B. No. 29 (NCC Workforce Development Ordinance Moratorium)

Date: March 16, 2009

The Developmental Disabilities Council opposes H.B. No. 29 NCC Workforce Development Ordinance Moratorium.

As background, New Castle County identified a shortage of affordable housing in its 2007 Comprehensive Development Plan. Consistent with the attached NCC Questions & Answers About Workforce Housing document, The Council concluded that many County residents have been priced out of the housing market. The County identified 12 remedial strategies to provide homeownership opportunities to low and moderate income households. One of the strategies was to establish a “workforce housing program” which is described at page 2 of the above Q. & A. document. It essentially provides developers density bonuses for including certain percentages of affordably priced units in applications and authorizes some reduced County fees.

Consistent with the attachments, NCC adopted an ordinance in February, 2008 adopting a workforce development program. Implementation was stayed in December, 2008 pursuant to another ordinance. H.B. No. 29 was then introduced to indefinitely stay any implementation of the NCC Workforce Development program as applied to new applications. The “dynamics” of this conflict are described in the attached January 22, 2009 News Journal article. Proponents of a “stay” argue that higher density units may impose greater stresses on public schools and roads.

On January 21, 2009, the Housing & Community Affairs Committee allowed the bill to leave committee. However, the vote was 1 on the merits and 8 unfavorable. The Committee report is attached.

Consistent with the attached March 6, 2009 News Journal article, NCC adopted a new ordinance addressing some of the detractors’ concerns. The prime sponsor of H.B. No. 29 is quoted as follows:

Jaques called the county’s amendments “a great step forward on their part”, and he said that “the county and the state are working really close now on these workforce housing issues.” He added that further legislation dealing with transportation needs is in the works.

A companion bill (H.B. No. 30) is pending which would increase the school assessment fee paid by developers.

While we oppose H.B. No. 29, we are hopeful that all stakeholders will continue the discussion to resolve the differences that exist in addressing the housing shortages in Delaware.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our remarks. Should you have questions regarding these comments please contact our office at 739-3333.

cc. Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens  
State Council for Persons with Disabilities  
AARP  
NCC Housing & Urban Development