



MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the General Assembly
From: David Brogan, Executive Director
Date: December 4, 2017
Re: **NJAA Opposition to A-96 (Prieto/Eustace/Lagana/Jimenez/Vainieri Huttle)**

On behalf of the New Jersey Apartment Association, and our members who provide both market rate and affordable housing to over one million New Jersey residents, we would like to express our **OPPOSITION** to A-96 (Prieto/Eustace/Lagana/Jimenez/Vainieri Huttle), and we would urge you to vote **NO** when the bill comes before the General Assembly for a vote on December 7, 2017.

NJAA seeks to work with the sponsors and the Legislature on additional fire safety measures in new multifamily housing construction. Unfortunately, A-96 has contradictory provisions, makes sweeping changes to ALL multifamily development, and would be devastating to both development and redevelopment across our state.

The bill would make a number of changes to the state's construction code for all residential multifamily projects. Specifically, A-96 would reduce the maximum number of wood-framed stories that may be built on top of a concrete base story (referred to as a podium) from four to three, reducing the living area by 25 percent. These podium style developments often feature parking and/or commercial space on the lower level, and apartments or condominiums on the floors above. This creates the live-work-play environment many towns and New Jerseyans desire. However, the reduction of living space could significantly inhibit the development of such projects.

Additionally, in every three and four story multifamily development, A-96 would require an enhanced fire sprinkler system, which would increase the cost of construction by approximately \$1,000 - \$1,500 per unit. This cost increase would be devastating to affordable housing projects.

Furthermore, in one and two story multifamily buildings, the bill would require concrete and masonry firewalls every 10,000 square feet. This mandate differs from every other standard currently used in the national codes, and increases the cost of constructing firewalls from \$4 per square foot to \$18 per square foot. It would also add approximately a month to the construction schedule. This would result in a dramatic increase in up front building costs without demonstrating a commensurate impact on life safety.

The safety of our residents is the number one priority for the multifamily housing industry. Furthermore, apartments continue to be one of the state's safest places to live, and remain the only affordable option for many New Jersey families. While we understand the sponsors' desire to increase standards, we must also recognize that any mandate that comes with a cost will impact both rents and the ability to develop market rate and affordable housing.

Once again, NJAA would like the opportunity to work with the Legislature on enhancing apartment fire safety measures, but A-96 is not the appropriate vehicle to effectively make such changes.

As such, NJAA opposes A-96 as currently drafted, and we ask you to vote **NO** on the bill when it comes before the General Assembly for a vote on December 7, 2017. Should you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 732-992-0600.