



MEMORANDUM

To: Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee Members
From: Nicholas Kikis, Vice President of Legislative & Regulatory Affairs
Date: February 27, 2019
Re: NJAA Support of S-2696 (Rice/O'Scanlon) – Establishes Comprehensive Framework to Combat Substandard Housing

On behalf of the New Jersey Apartment Association (NJAA), and our members who own, develop, and manage both market rate and affordable rental housing for over a million New Jersey residents, we **strongly support S-2696**, which would establish a comprehensive framework to address substandard rental properties. S-2696 would improve the state's ability to hold owners of substandard properties accountable while recognizing that the vast majority of properties are well-managed and well-maintained. As such, we strongly encourage you to vote **"YES"** when the bill comes before you on March 4, 2019.

NJAA's membership consists of professionally managed apartment communities. Our members invest in the upkeep of their properties, continuously train their workforce, and work to create a good environment for their tenants. We have a vested interest in making the distinction between the good actors who we represent, and the bad actors who are the impetus for this bill.

We commend the sponsors for their leadership on addressing problem landlords. S-2696 addresses deficiencies in the registration, inspection, and oversight of apartments that has allowed serious housing quality issues to persist even after they were identified by municipal and state inspectors.

Specifically, the bill:

- Increases transparency by modernizing the landlord registration process based upon recommendations from the New Jersey Law Revision Commission;
- Focuses inspection resources at the most troubled properties (those properties would be inspected every two years);
- Accelerates the resolution of significant violations when found during a DCA inspection;
- Provides tenants with instructions in English and Spanish on making emergency maintenance requests and contacting the 2-1-1 hotline;
- Establishes minimum maintenance standards and response times for maintenance issues;
- Addresses screening issues that could arise when a tenant lawfully withholds rent due to a habitability issue with their apartment; and,
- Increases penalties for bad actors.

Together, these changes represent a commonsense approach to improving oversight of substandard properties, holding bad actors accountable, and ensuring that all tenants have an opportunity to live in quality rental housing. Again, we encourage you to vote **"Yes"** when this measure comes before you.

Should you have any questions or if you would like to discuss this bill further, please do not hesitate to contact me at 732-992-0600 or nicholas@njaa.com.