



**Testimony of Tom Dallessio, FAICP/PP/CPM/FRSA in favor of S4451
On behalf of the American Planning Association—New Jersey Chapter**

**Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee
June 5, 2025**

Chairman Singleton and Members of the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee: I am Tom Dallessio, Vice President of Policy, American Planning Association – New Jersey Chapter, a licensed professional planner and a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners.

With me is Stan Slachetka, who is also a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners and a professional planner. Stan has worked on drafts of this bill and will speak to the details.

I'd like to make a few brief comments on behalf of APA-NJ. We are in support of this legislation. We see it as common sense. We see it as an opportunity to clarify the Municipal Land Use Law and to create opportunities for people to be more engaged in the planning process, which is always a good thing. We believe that this is an opportunity to create efficiency, effectiveness and equity in our planning process.

I'd just like to conclude by talking about why Master Plans are important. We appreciate the comments that were made by the N.J. League of Municipalities and the N.J. Conference of Mayors. We understand some of their concerns and we are interested in working with them and the Committee to make sure this bill meets everyone's needs.

Every person who lives in a municipality is in effect a co-owner/stockholder of that not-for-profit corporation of that municipality. The Master Plan is the strategic plan for that corporation. Who owns stock in a private corporation that doesn't have a strategic plan? Who owns stock in a private corporation where the strategic plan is at best confusing, at times conflicting?

This bill can actually create greater certainty and opportunities for everyone to work together, and provide an opportunity for the future, and that's clearly what we're all about.

I'd like to ask Stan to make some brief comments.

Testimony of Stan Slachetka, FAICP, PP in favor of S4451
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Housing is a critical need in New Jersey. It provides shelter for New Jersey's residents and supports our economic growth by providing jobs not only in construction but in all segments of the state's economy.

A comprehensive statewide housing policy should address the housing needs of all segments of New Jersey's population, including housing options for young families, seniors, and populations with special needs.

To accomplish this important objective, and understanding that planning and zoning in New Jersey takes place primarily at the local level, the proposed bill amends the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) to create a more holistic and comprehensive housing plan element in the municipal master plan that addresses housing for all segments of the community and encompasses a wide variety of housing types, not just the municipality's obligation to address its fair share of low and moderate-income housing. The bill also moves the statutory requirements of the housing plan from the Fair Housing Act to the MLUL to better integrate the housing plan with the municipality's land use plan and other elements of the master plan. This will ensure a comprehensive and coordinated planning approach in which the need for housing is evaluated in relation to other important community planning objectives, as well as its appropriate location relative to community facilities, services and shopping, employment, and transit.

The proposed bill will result in more efficient local planning by coordinating and integrating the housing planning process with the other currently required planning responsibilities of the municipality, including the municipality's land use plan. As a result, the proposed bill will result in minimal additional costs for municipalities given that much of what is required in the bill is now undertaken under a variety of existing laws governing local planning and housing. In fact, by coordinating these efforts and avoiding duplication, the resulting costs for municipalities will likely be reduced.

Ad hoc solutions and crisis responses are often more costly due to the lack of comprehensive, coordinated, and forward-looking planning. By moving the housing plan element into to the MLUL and realigning it with the land use plan and other elements of the comprehensive master plan, the all-too-often uncoordinated and disjointed initiatives related to the planning and implementation of the municipality's housing and land use plans can be made more efficient and effective, save money for the municipality, and ensure the successful implementation of plans to address the critical housing needs of the community.

New Jersey will continue to provide leadership in setting statewide housing policies and objectives, but the plans and strategies to achieve these objectives will be adopted and implemented by municipalities as part of their new comprehensive municipal housing plans. With the enactment of this bill, New Jersey can achieve the important goal of providing a sufficient supply and variety of housing that meets the needs of all its residents.