

Sandy Bill of Rights Letter:

Dear Governor Christie;

On behalf of the members of the Housing & Community Development Network of New Jersey and the thousands of residents of our state who are still struggling to recover from Superstorm Sandy, I am writing to urge you to sign the “Superstorm Sandy Bill of Rights,” S.1306, into law. As the statewide association of nonprofit community developers working to create homes and jobs in communities throughout the state, our members have been on the front lines in Sandy-impacted areas helping families and neighborhoods rebuild after the storm.

The Sandy Bill of Rights, which passed unanimously in both houses of the Legislature, is an important step in strengthening our recovery effort. The bill will establish a transparent and clear process for applying for Sandy recovery programs and help people to understand the decisions made regarding their application. Further, it will ensure that the appeals process and other critical elements are easy for people to follow.

At public hearings, in our members’ offices and at numerous events around the state, I have heard from residents who are trying to get back on their feet and return to their homes and businesses. The Sandy Bill of Rights will help clarify the process for everyone. Moreover, a strong, fair and transparent recovery effort is in the best interest of all New Jersey residents. I hope you will sign this important legislation without delay.

Please let me know if there is any way that the Network and our members can be of assistance in the Sandy recovery process.

Sincerely,

Staci Berger

Foreclosure Bill Letter:

Dear Governor Christie;

On behalf of our community development members and others working to create the homes and economic opportunities New Jersey residents need, I am writing to urge you to sign A.347, which authorizes municipalities to impose penalties on creditors that fail to remedy code violations of vacant foreclosed properties in a timely matter. This bill had overwhelming bipartisan support in both houses of the Legislature.

As you know, New Jersey has one of the highest rates of foreclosures in the country. Foreclosed properties are often neglected, and can become a blighted area in an otherwise thriving neighborhood. In addition to driving down the value of other properties in the area, inadequately maintained foreclosed properties can attract criminal activity and other public safety threats, including fire, in the area. More oversight is needed to preserve these properties so that they do not cause additional problems and strain limited municipal resources.

This bill provides municipalities with an important tool to prevent foreclosed properties from becoming safety threats by giving them the authority to impose penalties on creditors who fail to remedy code violations within 30 days. The creditors are currently responsible for maintaining foreclosed properties.

We hope you will sign this bill and help keep our communities safe from the effects of vacant foreclosed properties when they are not maintained to code. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions about this bill.

Sincerely,

Staci Berger

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