

VIA EMAIL: scousins@nyenate.gov ; Speaker@nyassembly.gov; CC: cymbros@assembly.state.ny.us;
kavanagh@nyenate.gov

March 7, 2022

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader, New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building, Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker, New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building, 932
Albany, NY 12248

Re: Lifting the FAR cap in NY's Multiple Dwelling Law

Leader Stewart Cousins and Leader Heastie:

New York faces an affordable housing crisis that is hurting our working families, holding back our local economy and fueling an explosion in homelessness. It is essential we address this crisis head-on by allowing for the responsible, swift development of new housing for lower-income, middle-income and vulnerable New Yorkers.

Gov. Kathy Hochul's executive budget includes a key provision for new affordable housing construction which would yield tens-of thousands of new units in areas with excellent infrastructure which are today limited by out-of-date, unnecessary restrictions on building density. Specifically, the measure would eliminate the State's floor area ratio (FAR) cap – which restricts density to 12-times the square footage of a building's footprint – for projects that go through New York City's uniform land use review process (ULURP).

A study by the Regional Plan Association found that the 149 census tracts most likely to be affected by the rule change contained just 9% of the city's population, but also more than half the jobs. And these areas were also within half-a-mile of a park and one-third of the city's subway stops. As we seek to provide better quality of life for working class New Yorkers while creating mixed use communities that are more sustainable along with affordable housing, lifting the FAR cap would address multiple planning challenges simultaneously.

The change would also allow communities to decide what type of new development they want for their area. And because land use changes would have to go through the City's ULURP process, any new zoning changes would also require new affordable units through the City's Inclusionary Zoning program.

Most importantly, lifting the FAR cap will create more and fairer housing choices for lower-income and middle-income New Yorkers and a more equitable plan for New York's growth. The new development the change will create will allow a wide array of people immediate access to areas of the city currently restricted to only high-income households—areas which are walkable, served by transit, and have excellent access to job centers.

For those reasons, we ask that you add language to your one-house budgets to allow for New York City's communities to wield this useful planning tool and for more New Yorkers to be able to have a choice of neighborhoods that are right for them, regardless of income.

Sincerely,



Rachel Fee
Executive Director
New York Housing Conference

In partnership with the following organizations:

Regional Planning Association (RPA)

Supportive Housing Network of New York (SHNNY)

Gateway Housing

Leading Age New York

LiveOn NY

Open New York

New York State Association for Affordable Housing (NYSFAFH)

Enterprise Community Partners

Citizens Housing & Planning Council (CHPCNY)

Dattner Architects

Fifth Avenue Committee

Gotham

Habitat for Humanity NYC and Westchester

JRW Strategies

Osborne Association

Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY)

Rockabill

CC: Honorable Brian Kavanagh
Legislative Office Building
Room 512
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Steven H. Cymbrowitz
Chairman, Assembly Housing Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 943
Albany, NY 12248