



## New Jersey Senate

P.O. Box 099  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0099  
(o) 609-292-5215  
(f) 609-633-7254

Richard J. Codey  
Senate President

Patrick M. Gillespie  
Executive Director

August 26, 2009

Acting Commissioner Chuck A. Richman  
New Jersey Department of Community Affairs  
PO Box 800  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0800

Dear Commissioner Richman

During the next year, local rent control boards will be considering requests for rent increases from their local landlords. I am concerned that without appropriate guidance these local boards may grant rent increases that are injurious to New Jersey tenants. My district office has already received phone calls from distressed tenants unable to pay their rent.

You are no doubt aware that the Social Security Administration has frozen the annual cost of living adjustment for social security beneficiaries for the next two years. This is but one indicator of the harsh economic conditions that face our nation. While New Jersey has fared better than other states, we have experienced significant job losses. Private sector wages have stagnated or fallen in real terms. Public sector wages for state employees have fallen due to the negotiated deferrals of wage increases and the taking of furlough days in Fiscal Year 2010. Many local unit employees are subject to a similar set of conditions.

This stagnation of both private and public sector income combined with any across the board increases in rent could put New Jersey tenants in a significant financial bind. Obviously, these are local decisions, and any individual landlord could still appeal to their local board for relief. I remain concerned, however, that local officials could lack enough information to render these judgments fairly.

Commissioner Richman

Page 2.

I urge you to inform local governments via a local finance notice or other appropriate means of the federal cost of living adjustment freeze, civil service commission rules on employee furloughs and any relevant private sector wage information.

I would also ask that you include in the same notice the regional housing affordability thresholds that your department calculates. Further, I would request that this notice include guidance regarding the number of renters in the State who are considered "burdened" by the percentage of their household income dedicated to housing costs.

Local rent control boards should not make their decisions in a vacuum with information provided to them solely from landlords seeking rent increases.

Thank you for considering this request, looking forward to your earliest possible response, I am

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Shirley K. Turner".

Shirley K. Turner  
Senator, District 15