

Christie Abolishes COAH in Power Grab Intended to Allow Wealthiest Municipalities to Exclude Working Families

June 30, 2011 - Trenton, NJ - Earlier this evening, Governor Christie filed a reorganization plan that would eliminate the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH). Governor Christie has made clear that his goal is to allow municipalities to exclude working families and other lower-income New Jerseyans, stating in his press release that he has "always believed that municipalities should be able to make their own decisions on affordable housing." Municipalities that want to build walls that exclude everyone but the wealthy thus have the support of Governor Christie.

"The governor is attempting to consolidate power so he can allow municipalities where the wealthiest New Jerseyans live keep out working folks," said Kevin D. Walsh, Associate Director of Fair Share Housing Center. "The governor has failed to get his way on this issue through the courts and the Legislature. This is just his newest way to enable municipalities to exclude hardworking folks who need good homes."

If it goes into effect in 60 days, the governor's plan will expose municipalities that are currently protected by COAH to litigation in the courts. Since 1986, the courts have allowed COAH to protect municipalities from litigation. Over 300 municipalities currently are protected by COAH. If COAH no longer exists, that protection is gone.

The governor previously shut down COAH through an executive order issued in February 2009, retreating after Fair Share Housing Center appealed his action in the courts. Most recently, the Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case involving regulations that allow municipalities to establish their own housing obligations.

Fair Share Housing Center, founded in 1975, is based in Cherry Hill. It is the only public interest organization devoted entirely to defending the housing rights of New Jersey's poor through implementing the Mount Laurel doctrine, which requires that each municipality provide its fair share of housing affordable to low- and moderate-income people.