

May 1, 2009

Chairman Gene Yaw  
Senate Box 203023  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Chairwoman Shirley Kitchen  
Senate Box 203003  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Chairman Yaw and Chairwoman Kitchen:

On behalf of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, representing all 67 counties in the commonwealth, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to offer written comments to the Senate Urban Affairs Committee regarding blighted properties and Senate Bill 1291 of 2008.

A section under our Sustainable Communities plank in the Pennsylvania County Platform speaks to our support for legislation that will provide solutions to the blight issue;

*4. The Association supports legislation to aid county and municipal government in preventing or rehabilitating blighted properties. (Adopted in 2008)*

We believe that blight is a serious concern on many different levels. Blight is a public safety concern for children who play in blighted properties and for firefighters and police officers who have to endure the increased risk of dealing with fires or illegal activities in these unstable properties.

Blight is a concern for the community because it lowers the property values of adjacent homes causing those property owners to lose equity in their homes. The decrease of property value results in a decreased amount of property tax revenue municipalities and counties rely on to provide vital services. Additionally, the blighted property may cost the municipality even more when they have to pay to secure or demolish the property.

Blight is a deterrent to those considering investment in the community. The blighted property could cost the community a loss of a new employer, new affordable housing, and the economic viability of nearby state and federally assisted neighborhood revitalization projects.

To remedy the array of issues blight causes, the Association has participated in substantive policy discussions with the blight task force started by Senator Rhoades and now continued by Senator Argall. We support the legislation that Senator Argall is planning on circulating for sponsorship this week, as we understand that it is consistent with the language in Senate Bill

1291 of 2008. We commend Senator Argall for taking a leadership role to reduce blight and we look forward to participating in further discussions with the blight task force.

Senate Bill 1291 of 2008 contains basic solutions to blight that we support. The creation of a state data base to track violations of property maintenance codes will help coordinate blight reduction efforts across municipalities. Additional funding for municipalities to enforce property maintenance codes will help ensure proper inspection of properties and a reduction to the backlog of properties that need boarded or demolished.

This legislation would encourage our communities to be safe, have investment that provides life sustaining jobs and create a better overall quality of life.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Kristen Goshorn of my staff at 717-232-7554 extension 3113, or email [kgoshorn@pacounties.org](mailto:kgoshorn@pacounties.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas E. Hill". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Douglas E. Hill  
Executive Director