

Yes in God's Backyard Act

Sponsored by Senator Brown

A bill to increase affordable rental housing on land owned by faith-based organizations and institutions of higher education.

The United States is estimated to have a shortage of at least 4.3 million homes.¹ For extremely low-income families it is estimated that there is a shortage of 7.3 million affordable and available rental homes.² In addition to the existing shortage, the current stock of affordable rental housing is declining across the country.³ Restrictive land use policies, extended permitting times, and the high cost of land and construction can limit a community's ability to construct new affordable units to house the people who live and work there. The impact of these policies is most evident in well-resourced neighborhoods.

Faith-based organizations and institutions of higher education are anchors in their communities. Historically, they are also institutions that own property. As communities continue to face a severe lack of affordable housing, new partnerships are forming to use land in innovative ways. Across the country, faith-based organizations and institutions of higher education are looking for ways to use additional land they already own to ease the housing crisis in their communities. While they might own the land, in many circumstances they are still restricted from using it to develop affordable rental housing due to local barriers like zoning and other policies. In other circumstances, they might be permitted to develop affordable rental housing, but are unsure how to begin.

Senator Brown's *Yes in God's Backyard Act (YIGBY)*:

- Provides technical assistance to faith-based organizations and institutions of higher education wanting to use their existing land to increase or preserve the supply of affordable rental housing.
- Provides technical assistance to local governments to learn best practices and how they can facilitate the production of affordable rental housing on land owned by faith-based organizations and institutions of higher education.
- Creates challenge grants to provide additional resources to communities that adopt policies that remove barriers to the production and preservation of affordable rental housing on property owned by faith-based organizations and institutions of higher education.

¹ "Affordability crisis: United States needs 4.3 million more homes," Zillow, June 22, 2023, available at <https://zillow.mediaroom.com/2023-06-22-Affordability-crisis-United-States-needs-4-3-million-more-homes>

² "The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Rental Homes," National Low Income House Coalition, available at <https://nlihc.org/gap#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20has%20a%20shortage,median%20income%2C%20whichever%20is%20greater>.

³ "The State of the Nation's Housing 2023," The Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, page 36, available at https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/reports/files/Harvard_JCHS_The_State_of_the_Nations_Housing_2023.pdf.

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