



CITY OF PITTSBURGH

Department of Law

William Peduto
Mayor

Lourdes Sánchez Ridge
Chief Legal Officer and City Solicitor

July 16, 2015

(Via Email)

Pennsylvania House Local Government Committee
c/o Rob Gaertner
rgaertne@pahousegop.com

RE: Comments on House Bill 809

Dear Members of the House Local Government Committee:

The City of Pittsburgh opposes House Bill 809. Neighborhoods that have dealt with over-occupancy have had grave concerns with the health and safety of renters. The middle class, who once occupied these neighborhoods, has been displaced by professional investors who drive the price of real estate unreasonably high. In addition, there is a proliferation of trash, litter, noise and illegal parking on blocks where houses are over-occupied, which has encroached on the neighbors' right to the quiet enjoyment of their property. It is important that those citizens are also represented when considering House Bill 809.


In addition, it is very important that zoning stay in the hands of the municipalities it most affects. To take this very important tool away from citizens, as the proposed legislation does, is to encourage residents to flee the City. As a municipality, we cannot afford that. Our citizens deserve safe, stable housing in close-in middle class neighborhoods, neighborhoods on bus lines, walkable to schools, groceries, and employment opportunities.

The City of Pittsburgh has had good results in court with prosecuting landlords, many of whom are not City residents, who violate our local zoning Ordinance. Our Ordinance restricts single family properties in residential areas from housing more than 3 unrelated persons. We do not treat students any differently than anyone else. The reason for our success in prosecution is that the community is not only supportive of this ordinance but demand the prosecution of these cases. Regulating zoning is an essential function of local government.

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Allowing over-occupancy in cities artificially affects property value, permits unscrupulous landlords to charge high rents to students for "homes" that are not safe, and jeopardizes the safety, security and enjoyment of neighbors. We urge you not to pass Bill 809.

Thank you,



Lourdes Sanchez Ridge
City Solicitor for the City of Pittsburgh

cc Amy Sturges, Director of Governmental Affairs
Pennsylvania Municipal League
Via Email: asturges@pamunicipalleague.org