

Testimony of Jerry Leach,
Executive Vice President, Home Builders Association
Metropolitan Harrisburg
Before the Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Labor & Industry Committee
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Good morning. Thank you Chairman Cox, Chairman Harkins, and the members of the Committee for giving me the opportunity to testify this morning. My name is Jerry Leach, and I am the Executive Vice President of the Home Builder Association of Metropolitan Harrisburg. I have over 40 years background and experience in the building industry. 30 years as a general contractor primarily building residential single family homes in Central Pennsylvania. Ironically 15 years of pre-UCC experience and 15 years under the UCC. In addition I have served for 5 years as the Director of Building Codes for the Pennsylvania Builders Association, I am certified under the UCC as a Building Code Official, and as a Residential Inspector, and have worked for a third party agency as such. Additionally I have worked as a private Code Consultant and as an instructor for both the Pennsylvania Construction Codes Academy, and the Pennsylvania Housing Research Center, where I still serve as a member of the Industry Advisory Council.

I share this rather diverse mix of background and experience with you, as I believe I am able to view this issue and the contents of HB 349 through a very unique lens, or lenses if you will than probably any other testimony you may hear today. As a builder I had to accept years ago, that the UCC was now the law, and I needed to learn about it and build to it. As a BCO and an inspector I have the greatest respect for the need for this code, and the proper administration and inspection of it.

In June of 2017 I applied for a building permit in New Cumberland Borough, Cumberland County. When filling out the land use, or zoning permit there was a space to fill in the Code Inspection Agency I would be using.

When I asked if I was to fill this in the permit officer said "yes". I had never built in a municipality where I had a choice so this was new for me. I ask her for her list of approved agencies and she said "we don't have a list".

So I asked for clarification, "You mean I can pick any Pennsylvania UCC approved TPA I want to use"? And she said "yes". She did tell me, that usually people picked from one of these three, and she named three local

TPA's, but again stressed "but you don't have to use one of them". While I was familiar with all three and had no problem with any of them, I decided to go with one that was not mentioned to see how that may be received. When I contacted that TPA to ask them if they would be willing to inspect in New Cumberland they were pleasantly surprised that I was given the option and agreed to handle the application, plan review and inspection process. In the end, all went well, I paid the TPA directly for the permit, plan review and inspections and they coordinated all necessary documentation with the Borough.

While this may not be the norm, I have come to learn it does occur in various municipalities across Pennsylvania. Where I live, Juniata County, I am aware of one municipality that has a choice of 3 or 4, TPA's and when they heard I was doing inspections locally they asked if they could add me to their list. Another municipality Fermanagh Township, also Juniata County have been dealing with an issue in which there seemed to be no solution to resolve the dispute between the builder and the TPA other than to give the builder the authority to contact another TPA to complete the process.

I would imagine you are going to hear a number of reason why this is a good idea, and some that are obviously opposed to it. As a resident, and a tax payer in Pennsylvania I rarely see supporting a monopoly in any industry as a good thing, and where fair competition is encouraged good things usually follow. As both a Former Builder, and as a Code Official, I see the merits of HB 349 and strongly support it. I thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and would be happy to take your questions.

Jerry Leach

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