

October 8, 2015

Charles Richman

Commissioner

New Jersey Dept. of Community Affairs

101 South Broad Street

Trenton, NJ 08625

Anthony Marchetta

Executive Director

New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency

637 South Clinton Ave

Trenton, NJ 08650

Dear Commissioner Richman and Executive Director Marchetta,

As you are probably aware, New Jersey’s slow economic recovery and the recent wave of casino closures in Atlantic City have had a significant and lasting impact on the state and the region, including a foreclosure rate that is amongst the highest in the nation.

The foreclosure rate is especially severe in Atlantic County and the surrounding area, and we are writing to voice our concern and to urge your agencies to take action to assist homeowners in the region.

A recent editorial published by the Press of Atlantic City noted that one in every 258 homes in Atlantic County filed for foreclosure during the month of July. This is simply unacceptable, and the crisis will only be exacerbated in the coming months as unemployment benefits begin to run out for displaced casino workers.

Both agencies -- HMFA and DCA -- have tools at their disposal to help stem the tide of foreclosures. HMFA and DCA could provide grant dollars to local nonprofit organizations designed to assist troubled homeowners, and should implement aggressive communication strategies to inform homeowners of the resources available to them.

We request that your agencies send representatives to Atlantic County to provide in-person assistance to distressed homeowners. Representatives should provide guidance to homeowners and assist them in registering for mortgage modification programs.

We also request that your agencies provide our offices with the most recently available information regarding the magnitude of assistance provided through programs like the federal Home Affordable Modification Program, the Home Affordable Refinance Program, the Making Homes Affordable program, the National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling program, and New Jersey’s HomeSaver program.

Fortunately, some regions and areas of New Jersey have fared better than others in terms of foreclosures. Logically, resources from relief programs like those listed above should be concentrated in areas and regions where need is the greatest.

We hope this letter serves to encourage both HMFA and DCA to take swift and aggressive steps to address the foreclosure crisis in the region.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Sweeney

Senate President

Senator Jim Whelan

2nd Legislative District

Assemblyman Vincent Mazzeo

2nd Legislative District