



October 20, 2021

Dear Senator Brown:

Thank you for your leadership on and commitment to addressing the nation's growing affordability and availability housing crisis.

The Ohio Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Ohio) and our almost 1,500 planners and planning officials across the state applaud your efforts as Chairman of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee to find and advance proven and equitable housing solutions that strengthen communities, promote fairness, and increase access to opportunity.

In particular, we commend you for supporting the Biden Administration's efforts to work with local governments and states to immediately boost housing supply. Planners share President Biden's goal of reforming exclusionary and racist zoning; unfortunately, the Administration's latest actions will result in negligible change unless a key provision in sweeping social spending package is preserved.

APA Ohio asks for your support in retaining the *Unlocking Possibilities Program* (Section 40103) in any final Building Back Better Act reconciliation package.

We strongly believe that overhauling underlying zoning is a necessary first step toward building communities of opportunity. Further, we know the return on investment of the other housing programs proposed in reconciliation will be greatly enhanced when exclusionary zoning is removed as a barrier to affordable housing options. Without significant changes to antiquated zoning laws and development codes, communities and regions will struggle to build housing in the most desirable – and often, out of reach areas – even with historic amounts of federal stimulus. Now is to partner with communities, regions, and states to rethink zoning.

Importantly, Unlocking Possibilities takes significant action to address historical injustices created by discriminatory and restrictive housing policies such as redlining, a practice that has preserved the legacy of segregation in communities here in Ohio and across the nation.

The provision also takes aim at persistent housing affordability challenges. Section 40103 would enable planners to identify and advance comprehensive zoning and code reforms by providing \$4.5 billion in new support, incentives, and technical assistance to communities committed to tackling housing affordability challenges. With a deficit of more than 200,000 affordable rental units in Ohio state alone, it is imperative that something be done to break



American Planning Association
Ohio Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

the status quo. The Unlocking Possibilities Program is one such solution; a strong federal partnership is all this is missing.

On behalf of all APA Ohio members, I look forward to working with you to preserve the Unlocking Possibilities Program. Please feel free to contact me or APA Public Affairs Director Jason Jordan (jjordan@planning.org) if you have questions or would like additional information. APA has research and policy [materials](#) available on each topic and is ready to share our expertise and insights.

Thank you for your leadership and service at such a pivotal moment in our nation's history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Rachel S. Ray'.

Rachel Ray, AICP
President, APA Ohio

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Emily Phillis'.

Emily Phillis, AICP
Chair, APA Ohio Legislative Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Christine Dersi Davis'.

Christine Dersi Davis, AICP
Executive Director, APA Ohio