



**PENNSYLVANIA  
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**TO: Members, House Local Government Committee**

**FROM: Ed Troxell, Director of Government Affairs**

**DATE: July 20, 2015**

**RE: House Bill 809, Preemption of Municipal Ordinances for Student Housing**

The Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB) presents this memo for the committee's consideration as you begin the process of vetting House Bill 809, sponsored by Representative Susan Helm. **PSAB opposes House Bill 809 (PN 954) and respectfully requests members oppose advancing the bill.**

PSAB is a statewide, non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to serving 957 borough governments. Since 1911, PSAB has represented the interests of boroughs and helped to shape the laws that laid their foundation. The Association improves and assists local governments through legislative advocacy, research, education and other services. With more than 2.6 million Pennsylvanians residing in borough communities, our members strive to deliver quality leadership and service to citizens across the Commonwealth.

Many of our borough communities are home to Pennsylvania's colleges and universities. While they are proud to host these vital institutions, several factors present challenges to hosting a secondary education institution. One of these challenges is finding the right balance between protecting homeowner investments, providing a good quality of life, and adequate student housing.

Today at the public hearing you will hear from three boroughs about the specific problems they face with student housing in residential neighborhoods and how they worked to find practical solutions. **PSAB strongly supports enabling local communities to meet these challenges with tools such as limiting the number of unrelated individuals in a one or two family dwelling.** If House Bill 809 were to become law, these communities would lose this vital tool and begin to see homeowners move away, their tax base continue to erode, and peaceable communities turn into problem areas placing more stress on police departments.

One of PSAB's foundational principles is to allow local governments to govern their communities with the best resources and tools possible. When we allow local governments the ability to use the tools at their disposal to meet their unique challenges problems becomes more manageable. We urge the committee not to stifle the valiant efforts many of our boroughs have made faced with difficult circumstances unique to their community.

In closing, we respectfully ask the committee members to oppose House Bill 809. All preemptions of municipal powers should be considered carefully. Preempting a local government the power to protect their citizen's health, safety and welfare would be a disastrous precedent. Thank you for your consideration of our perspectives on House Bill 809.