

Collegiate Housing Infrastructure Act of 2017 (H.R. 1200/S. 736) **Preserving the Future of Not-for-Profit Student Housing**

Our Growing Population of College Students Needs Safe, Modern, and Affordable Housing. Rising enrollment is creating severe housing shortages on college campuses nationwide, with many institutions forced to put students into private hotels, dormitory lounges, and triple resident rooms. Post-secondary enrollment will increase 15% from 1999-2011 as a “baby boomlet” peaks in 2008, when 2.1 million students will be enrolled in colleges and universities nationwide. **Consistent with the current Congressional focus on making college more affordable**, the Collegiate Housing and Infrastructure Act will help ensure that more students can access fraternal and other not-for-profit housing, which is usually less expensive than university residence halls and for-profit off-campus housing.

Greek Housing is a Key Source of Collegiate Housing. The housing shortage would be even worse without fraternities and sororities, who are the nation’s largest not-for-profit student landlords. Fraternities and sororities provide housing for over 250,000 students each year at no cost to the host institution. This several billion dollar not-for-profit housing operation would be vastly enhanced should tax deductible contributions be able to fund safety and structural improvements. Fraternal housing, like the housing provided by host institutions, offers students a living and learning environment designed to promote academic and personal enrichment.

Collegiate Housing Capacity and Safety Need to be Upgraded. Life safety upgrades are the top challenge facing fraternal housing, as their smaller and older living spaces have twice the injury rate of other campus fires and significantly higher rates of property losses. 80% of fatalities in student housing fires since 2000 have occurred in off-campus housing such as fraternities and sororities. The simple step of installing automatic sprinkler systems saves lives - there has never been a fire-related fatality in fraternal housing that has sprinklers. ***There have been fatal fraternity house fires in both Nebraska and Missouri in the last year and these are the latest in a series of preventable tragedies.***

Without a Change in Current Law, Fraternities and Sororities Cannot Afford the Safety Upgrades Required by State Laws and Local Ordinances. In Ames, Iowa, a city ordinance is causing fraternities to struggle with the costs passed on to them to provide safety upgrades such as fire protecting sprinklers. One Iowa State University fraternity president stated that his fraternity would not be able to afford such upgrades that could cost close to \$200,000. State College, Pennsylvania, home of Penn State University, and other college towns are passing similar ordinances that are important for student safety, but cannot be met under the current financial system of fraternities.

Now is the Time to Provide Equitable Tax Treatment for All Not-For-Profit Student Housing. There is no sound policy reason for distinguishing between gifts made to colleges and universities for infrastructure improvements and gifts made to fraternities and sororities for the benefit of similarly situated students.

The **Collegiate Housing and Infrastructure Act of 2007 (H.R. 1200/S. 736)** erases this disparity and allows tax deductible contributions to not-for-profit student housing such as fraternity and sorority foundations to be used for the same purposes that a college or university could use such contributions (except for physical fitness equipment). In the 108th Congress, the Collegiate Housing and Infrastructure Act was included in the Charitable Giving Act that passed the House by a 408-13 margin. In the 109th Congress, this bill had bipartisan support with 151 House sponsors and 28 Senate sponsors. ***We already have a bipartisan team of 172 House sponsors and 35 Senate sponsors in the 110th Congress.***

Passing the Collegiate House and Infrastructure Act would:

- ***Encourage new charitable contributions to improve current collegiate housing***, thereby preserving and upgrading existing housing capacity and helping construct the new housing capacity needed to accommodate rapidly growing student populations.
- ***Result in safer student housing*** by enabling fraternities and sororities to fund the installation of modern life safety equipment such as fire sprinklers, smoke detectors, and alarm systems.
- ***Promote a private-sector solution*** to protect and preserve public investments in higher education institutions and the students themselves.