

Rep. Sue Helm  
Testimony on House Bill 809  
House Local Government Committee Hearing  
July 20, 2015

**Good morning, Chairman Harper, (Chairman Freeman) and other members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to take part in this morning's hearing.**

**I am state Representative Sue Helm and I serve the 104<sup>th</sup> District, which includes parts of Dauphin and Lebanon counties.**

**I would like to thank the committee for scheduling this hearing on what we feel is an important piece of legislation that would have a significant and positive impact on those attending colleges and universities in Pennsylvania, the owners of student housing properties, along with the communities in which the schools are located.**

**I am pleased to be able to sponsor House Bill 809 and provide some details on what we are trying to accomplish with the legislation.**

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**Our goal is to end the possibility of there being any discrimination against students when they are looking for a place to live while attending classes in college communities across the Commonwealth.**

**Students should not be discriminated against simply because they are students. Many of them are veterans, or married, and are good neighbors that do no cause problems.**

**We believe there should be no blanket prohibition or undue regulation in any residential zone.**

**House Bill 809 would do that by pre-empting any municipal ordinance that prohibits the occupation of a housing unit by students or unrelated persons who are living together.**

**The legislation specifically says any local regulation that prohibits the occupation of a housing unit based on an individual's "matriculation status" would be pre-empted.**

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**“Matriculation status” is defined in our proposal as the state of being enrolled in a postsecondary educational institution, including reasonable periods of time before and between admission to a college or university.**

**Under the bill, the occupation of a housing unit by students or unrelated persons would be based on several factors:**

- 1) There is reasonable and sufficient on-street and off-street parking for the number of vehicles registered to, or driven by, the occupants of the housing unit.**
  
- 2) That no more than two persons can occupy each bedroom of the housing unit.**
  
- 3) And that the housing unit does not have any unique health and safety concerns or unresolved code violations.**

**Municipalities typically control student housing through zoning ordinances. We believe it is entirely within reason for them to enact and enforce rules to regulate such things as**

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**parking, noise levels, health and safety concerns or code violations.**

**However, we also believe it is unfair and unreasonable to attempt to regulate these issues by singling out students or unrelated persons living together based on the incorrect assumption made by some municipalities that they will be problem citizens and undesirable neighbors who will have a negative impact on the community and its quality of life.**

**Thank you, chairman, that concludes my remarks.**

**I would now be happy to answer any questions you or members of the committee have about House Bill 809.**

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