

2026 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Housing

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Contact: Michael Kelly

The New York State Association of REALTORS®, Inc. welcomes the opportunity to submit written testimony on the housing section of the Executive Proposed Budget. NYSAR is supportive of key executive budget and legislative proposals and looks forward to working with the State Legislature & Governor on these proposals to expand housing supply, access and affordability.

SEQRA Reform (TED Part R)

NYSAR strongly supports Governor Hochul’s “Let Them Build” agenda and the proposed reforms to the State’s Environmental Quality Review Act contained within Part R of S.9008/A.10008. These reforms would expedite the approval of housing developments with limited environmental impact, which is critical to addressing the state’s ongoing housing shortage. We are supportive of the specific provisions within the Governor’s proposal to expedite approval for certain projects within New York City of up to 500 units (or 250 units if in a lower density area) and outside of New York City for up to 100 units.

Delays associated with the SEQRA are well-documented and have cost New Yorkers considerable time and financial resources by contributing to the housing shortage and affordability problems facing the state. Our members – licensed real estate professionals – continue to navigate a record-low inventory market for buyers, one in which first-time homebuyers have tremendous difficulty finding affordable starter homes. Housing supply constraints have priced first-time buyers out, and the best way to get more young buyers into the housing market is to generate supply by making it easier to build. SEQRA reform would ease the regulatory burden on the construction of market rate and affordable homes, making it easier for families to move, as interest rates continue to decline. This movement would in turn open up existing starter homes for first-time buyers.

NYSAR is particularly supportive of the fact that the Governor’s proposal allows for both single-family developments and multifamily developments to be exempt from SEQRA review if specific criteria are met. Both types of housing are needed and any proposal to exempt housing construction from SEQRA should apply to both single and multifamily housing.

On the supply side, NYSAR also supports the inclusion of **\$50 million** in the Executive Budget for starter and modular homes. This investment will help build more of the homes needed to retain young families.

First-Time Homebuyers

As noted above, first-time homebuyers are struggling immensely in today’s housing market. Nationally, the median age for a first-time homebuyer reached a historic high of 40 years old in 2025, as first-time

buyers made up just 21% of the market¹. When coupled with New York State's lowest homeownership rate in the nation of 54.3%², more support is clearly needed for first-time homebuyers.

Additionally, NYSAR has long advocated for a long-term approach to addressing the state's chronically low homeownership rate. One such solution is a **first-time homebuyer savings account program (S.1157/A.5098)**, which NYSAR is advocating for inclusion in the enacted state budget. This bill would establish a tax deduction of up to \$10,000 and a voluntary savings account for individuals and families looking to save for a first home in New York State. NYSAR also supports **S.3150/A.787, which would establish the New York State first home grant program** for first-time homebuyers.

Support for first-time homebuyers is critical if the state is serious about 1) addressing its housing crisis, and 2) retaining young New Yorkers and families, who often flock to other states for more affordable housing opportunities. Although much attention has been devoted to the inventory shortage and construction lags in our state's housing market, the affordability concerns of young and aspiring homeowners are also linked to the difficulty middle-income and upwardly mobile New Yorkers have in saving for a home in our high-cost state. In 1998, the State launched a 529 college savings program to address a different but similar problem: the need to help more families save for a college education, which was rising rapidly. New York State is now at a critical juncture for housing costs. Establishing a first-time homebuyer saving account would help families save for their child's first home and incentivize young adults starting their careers to take a portion of their earnings and save for their own first home in New York.

In conclusion, increasing housing supply and expanding access to homeownership require targeted policies and programs in this year's state budget. NYSAR encourages the State Legislature to embrace Governor Hochul's initiatives to reform SEQRA and expedite the development of more housing, while including key programs to aid first-time homebuyers. We thank the State Assembly and Senate for the opportunity to submit testimony and welcomes the opportunity to work with both houses on these critical initiatives for New Yorkers.

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¹ <https://www.nar.realtor/magazine/real-estate-news/nar-2025-profile-of-home-buyers-sellers-reveals-market-extremes>

² <https://www.propertyshark.com/info/us-homeownership-rates-by-state-and-city/>