

Representative Zimmerman,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony and industry insight in advance of the May 21 legislative discussions regarding accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in Pennsylvania. We appreciate your leadership on this issue and the opportunity to share Acorn Built Homes' direct experience working with homeowners and municipalities throughout the region.

Acorn Built Homes is a Pennsylvania-based residential design-build firm specializing in high-quality additions, accessory dwelling units, accessory living spaces, and custom residential projects. Our company was created to provide homeowners with a fully integrated and professionally managed experience from initial feasibility and permitting through design, construction, and project completion.

We focus on delivering thoughtfully designed, fully code-compliant structures that are built on permanent foundations and constructed on-site using traditional stick-built construction methods. Our projects are not prefabricated or transported in. Every project is customized to the homeowner's property, municipality, and long-term needs.

Acorn Built Homes is built around two core principles:

1. Quality – We are committed to delivering residential structures of the highest quality and craftsmanship. Our projects are designed and constructed as permanent extensions of the home and neighborhood fabric, with full kitchens, bathrooms, utility connections, and move-in-ready finishes.
2. Customer Experience – We built our company around simplifying an otherwise difficult and fragmented construction process. We assembled an experienced team to manage permitting, zoning coordination, design, interior design, land development, engineering, construction, and utility coordination under one roof. Our goal is to remove uncertainty and create a clear, professionally guided process for homeowners.

Additional information can be found here:

<https://acornbuilthomes.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/acorntinyhomesPA/>

<https://www.instagram.com/acorntinyhomes/>

Through our work in the market since opening in December 2024, we have developed meaningful insight into both consumer demand for ADUs and the regulatory barriers that currently limit their practical implementation across Pennsylvania.

- Demand for ADUs is significant and growing rapidly. We currently receive more than 200 inquiries per month and have conducted hundreds of property consultations with homeowners throughout Pennsylvania. The strongest driver of demand is aging in place, where families are seeking safe, independent living accommodations for parents or relatives while remaining close to family support systems. A second major driver is housing for adult children who are unable to afford today's housing and rental costs. We also regularly encounter homeowners seeking ADUs as a means of generating supplemental income, offsetting rising property costs, or creating flexible long-term living arrangements for changing family needs. Based on our direct experience in the field, consumer demand for ADUs is already substantial and continues to grow.

- Municipal regulations surrounding ADUs are highly inconsistent and create significant confusion and unpredictability for homeowners. Many municipalities do not permit ADUs by right at all, while others require conditional use approvals, zoning hearings, or special exceptions that add considerable time, cost, and uncertainty to the process. In many cases, municipalities only permit attached ADUs, which substantially limits design flexibility and prevents many otherwise viable properties from accommodating accessory living spaces. Homeowners are often surprised to learn that regulations can vary dramatically from one municipality to the next despite similar neighborhood and property conditions.

- Setback requirements frequently make otherwise appropriate ADU projects infeasible, particularly on smaller suburban residential lots. In many municipalities, rear-yard and side-yard setback requirements leave insufficient buildable area for a detached accessory structure despite ample room existing in practical terms. Based on our experience evaluating residential properties throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania, reduced setback requirements are critical if ADUs are to become a realistic housing option for average homeowners rather than only those with large properties or estate-sized lots.

- Restrictions on kitchens and cooking appliances significantly undermine the intended function and usefulness of ADUs. Many municipalities prohibit full kitchens, built-in cooking appliances, or independent utility configurations out of concern that ADUs will become improperly used rental units. In practice, however, these restrictions often make the spaces less functional for seniors, adult children, caregivers, or long-term family occupancy. In our experience, homeowners seeking ADUs overwhelmingly desire fully functional, self-contained living spaces capable of supporting independent daily living.

- Septic system regulations and approval processes currently represent one of the largest practical barriers to ADU construction in many areas of Pennsylvania. County-level requirements and PA DEP processes associated with additions, secondary dwelling units,

or expanded bedroom counts often create substantial engineering costs, extended timelines, and procedural complexity. In many situations, the cost and delay associated with septic approvals can make otherwise reasonable projects financially infeasible for homeowners. We have encountered numerous cases where residents interested in creating housing for aging parents or family members ultimately abandon projects due to septic-related costs and uncertainty.

I appreciate your leadership on this issue and look forward to testifying before legislators on May 21 and continuing the conversation. I would also welcome the opportunity to hear your thoughts as these discussions continue to develop.

Thank you,

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