



## Freeman language addressing blight, homelessness passes House

Rep. Robert L. Freeman *April 26, 2022 | 4:41 PM*

**HARRISBURG, April 26** – Legislation that would help communities turn blighted properties into affordable housing options today passed the state House of Representatives, according to state Rep. Robert Freeman.

“A lack of affordable housing is one of the primary causes of homelessness in Pennsylvania, according to a recent study,” said Freeman, D-Northampton. “In the Lehigh Valley, and communities across the commonwealth, blight has turned troubled properties into liabilities. My proposal is tailored to the unique needs we’re facing in Pennsylvania and would provide a substantive solution.”

Earlier this month, the language from Freeman’s H.B. 960 was amended into H.B. 2209, legislation that would allow a land bank board to establish a “virtual” quorum via internet platform to conduct a board meeting.

Land banks are one of the tools that municipalities may use to facilitate the return of vacant, abandoned and tax-delinquent properties to productive use. As of June 2020, there are 25 land banks actively operating in Pennsylvania.

Freeman's bill would provide a directive to municipal land banks to convert a portion of the blighted properties they acquire into housing for the homeless.

Specifically, it would expand the powers of land banks to enter into partnerships with organizations in the private sector to create local solutions to address the lack of housing for the homeless population within their community and exempt all land bank transactions from both state and local realty transfer taxes.

An estimated 15,000 Pennsylvanians experience homelessness (either being on the streets, doubled up with family or friends, or in shelters) on any given day.

The proposal now moves to the state Senate for consideration.