



# A.3647 (Cunningham)/S.3397 (Gounardes)

STAFF CONTACT : Joseph Alston | Director of Government Affairs | 5186944464

<p><b>BILL</b></p> <p><b>A.3647 (Cunningham)/S.3397 (Gounardes)</b></p>
<p><b>SUBJECT</b></p> <p><b>The "Faith-Based Affordable Housing Act," which allows residential development on religious land.</b></p>
<p><b>DATE</b></p> <p><b>February 10, 2025</b></p>
<p><b>SUPPORT</b></p>

The Business Council of New York State supports A.3647 (Cunningham)/S.3397 (Gounardes), the "Faith-Based Affordable Housing Act," which allows residential development on religious land. New York State is currently suffering from a severe housing crisis. The scarcity of affordable housing has put immense pressure on low and middle-income families, deepening social inequities. By allowing development on religious land, we can rapidly increase the supply of affordable housing without straining the existing urban and suburban landscape.

Currently, nearly 50% of New Yorkers spend over 30% of their income on housing, and over 100,000 people are homeless each night. Religious institutions often play a central role in their communities, offering spiritual and social support. By developing affordable housing, these institutions can further their community service missions, creating stronger, more resilient neighborhoods with access to essential support services. Affordable housing development stimulates economic growth, creating jobs and attracting new residents. This leads to increased investment in local communities and a cycle of sustainable development. This legislation fosters partnerships between religious institutions, developers, and government agencies, combining their strengths to achieve common goals.

The act also preserves cultural and historical landmarks by ensuring sensitive development, promoting a thoughtful approach to building residential communities that prioritizes minimizing environmental impact, preserving existing natural features, and considering the needs of the surrounding community. Increasing affordable housing directly combats homelessness, enabling individuals and families to regain stability and access essential services. Many faith-based organizations that are land-rich but cash-poor can revitalize their properties through this legislation, enhancing their community service impact. In addition, new residential buildings created under this act will be taxed like any other housing, contributing to local tax revenues. The act mandates development within existing, developed areas, ensuring sustainable,

climate-friendly solutions. Local regulations and landmark protections remain intact, with no alterations to existing processes. Another key component to consider is mixed-income housing, requiring income-restricted, permanently affordable units. This approach unlocks more housing options, leveraging market rate rents to support affordable units. Furthermore, housing opportunities will be open to all New Yorkers, regardless of religious beliefs or practices, with existing laws preventing discrimination.

The Faith-Based Affordable Housing Act represents a pragmatic and innovative approach to one of our state's most pressing challenges. By enabling residential development on religious land, we can create more affordable housing, strengthen our communities, promote economic growth, and preserve our cultural heritage. Our vast and diverse coalition urges lawmakers to come together and pass A.3647 (Cunningham)/S.3397 (Gounardes) to help reinvigorate our institutions and build more housing across New York State. The Business Council of New York State strongly supports this legislation and urges its expedited passage to address the housing needs of New Yorkers. This legislation is a critical step toward a more equitable and prosperous future for all.