

Policy Alert: Bill Would Provide Legal Protection for RCOs

Last week, legislation was introduced in Philadelphia City Council that, if passed, would secure Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) legal protection from the city for their involvement in zoning matters. The bill was introduced by Council President Darrell Clarke — who is retiring at the end of his term in January — and is co-sponsored by Councilmembers Curtis Jones (District 4) and Mark Squilla (District 1). The bill does not specify how exactly the city should indemnify and defend RCOs on zoning-related matters that wind up in court, leaving exact details to the law department to create.

The RCO designation was originally created in 2012 during Mayor Michael Nutter's administration to officially acknowledge neighborhood groups that frequently get involved in zoning matters, granting them the power to go before the city's Zoning Board of Adjustment. Historically, this designation has not granted RCOs any special legal protections, which is what this bill aims to do. If passed as written, the current legislation has the potential to allow these organizations to appeal virtually every development project proposed throughout the city. For this reason, Council President Clarke has indicated a willingness to reexamine the rules that currently govern RCOs.

Because the legislation is a proposed amendment to the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter, if it passes City Council, the measure would be put to Philadelphia voters on ballot in April 2024. Ballot measures have a good chance of being approved, based on historic precedent.

For more information about this legislation, please contact the Philadelphia Public Strategies team.



Joseph Hill

**Managing
Director, Cozen
O'Connor
Public
Strategies**

jhill@cozen.com
Phone: (215) 665-2065
Fax: (215) 665-2013



Brianna A. Westbrooks

**Government
Relations
Associate,
Cozen O'Connor
Public
Strategies**

bwestbrooks@cozen.com
Phone: (215) 665-4757
Fax: (215) 665-2013

Related Practice Areas

- Government Relations - Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies