

Resolution # 65-03

**The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA)  
The Pennsylvania State University**



**of the 65th Assembly**  
April, 6 2016

*Be it decided by the Assembly of Elected Delegates,*

**Zoning Ordinance Amendment Bill**

**Support of the amendment exempting PhD students from student housing ordinance**

(Decided: [ Y / N / A ])

**Nature of the Situation:**

Part of GPSA's mission is to provide a forum to address the concerns of graduate and professional students and to provide a unified and informed voice representing graduate and professional students to any organization that makes decisions on behalf of students. The current zoning ordinance in the State College Borough uses a narrow definition of student which does not distinguish undergraduate students from PhD students. The Borough defines a student as anyone taking a course as part of a degree program. PhD students are paid by the university for either their teaching duties or research duties and take courses solely for the purpose of broadening their knowledge in specialized topics. As instructors and postdoctoral researchers are also paid to perform these same tasks, I believe many PhD students would support an amendment to the current zoning ordinance to include an exemption for PhD students.

Many PhD students I have spoken with have had difficulty finding quiet and affordable housing, especially in their first year of study. I've been told stories of PhD students sleeping on a friend's couch during the week they take their qualifying exams and stories of students who due to lack of sleep quit their doctoral program entirely. Although this amendment will not completely alleviate this problem, its passage would be a step forward in ensuring the rental market within the borough is adequate for the needs of future PhD students. Including PhD students in the body of professional renters would incentivize more developers to build more properties specifically targeted at professionals. As members of the council have pointed out, such projects were simply inconceivable ten years ago. A show of support for this amendment by the graduate student body would not only show the council that the current zoning ordinance

affects many of our constituents, it would also show developers that there is some demand for rental properties targeted at professionals and encourage them to build rental properties with these considerations in mind.

**Recommended Course of Action:**

The Graduate and Professional Student Association, on behalf of the graduate student body at Penn State, supports the proposed amendment to modify the Borough's definition of student to exempt PhD students.

Respectfully submitted,

**William Wright**

Delegate, Eberly College of Science

President \_\_\_\_\_

Affirm

Veto

The Graduate and Professional Student Association