

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 24, 2026

Mr. Mike Boso
President
International Code Council
200 Massachusetts Ave NW, Suite 250
Washington, DC 20001

Dear President Boso,

Families across the country continue to face rising costs, and housing remains one of the most significant pressures on their budgets. One-third of middle-class families struggle to afford basic necessities such as food, child care, and housing.¹ As Members of Congress, we know affordability is a top concern for our constituents. We write to urge the International Code Council (ICC), as it begins its process of updating the International Building Code (IBC), to make multifamily housing affordability a central priority.

As you know, state and local entities are typically responsible for adopting and enforcing building codes. A state or locality may set those standards itself, but more commonly, they adopt a set of building codes set by third-party non-profit organizations like the ICC. The ICC publishes 15 model building codes to cover different types of buildings. The two primary ICC codes are the International Residential Code (IRC), which covers one- and two-family dwellings and townhomes under four stories, and the International Building and International Existing Building Codes, which cover commercial, industrial, educational, and larger residential structures, such as apartment buildings. As more Americans choose denser forms of housing, such as townhomes and apartments, our building codes must reflect this shift.

Yet in the United States, multifamily housing is significantly more expensive to build than single-family housing, with costs rising further as density increases.² This trend poses a growing challenge as multifamily construction accounts for an increasing share of new housing.³ While higher construction costs for multifamily housing are the standard in the United States, this is not always the case for communities abroad. These increased costs are, in part, due to American codes and standards. One paper found that changes to the ICC's International Building Code over three cycles have raised multifamily construction costs by 12.4 percent.⁴ Research has

¹ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/in-every-corner-of-the-country-the-middle-class-struggles-with-affordability/>

² <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2025/02/small-single-stairway-apartment-buildings-have-strong-safety-record>, Fig. 4

³ <https://housing-data.vercel.app/states/United%20States>

⁴ https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5984894

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found that developers in the United States pay at least three times as much for elevators as those in Western Europe, with much of this difference driven by codes and standards.⁵

Globally, building practices are moving toward harmonized standards that promote competition, innovation, and cost efficiency while maintaining safety. However, ICC codes predominantly reference domestic standards, limiting the adoption of proven, cost-saving innovations in areas such as elevators, windows, and heat pumps.⁶ This raises costs for American consumers and reduces the competitiveness of U.S. manufacturers in international markets.

We believe the ICC and other standard-writing organizations have a responsibility to ensure their codes strike the right balance: maintaining the life-safety systems that protect occupants and first responders while eliminating duplicative outdated, or unnecessarily prescriptive provisions that drive up costs without improving safety. While the ICC has taken steps to address costs in the IRC, similar efforts have not been widely extended to the IBC, which governs multifamily housing.⁷ This gap is reflected in the stated goals of the two codes: while the IRC's purpose specifically mentions affordability, this aim is absent from the IBC's stated purpose.⁸⁹

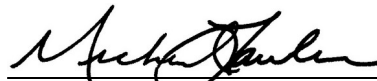
Accordingly, we urge the ICC to expand research and stakeholder engagement focused specifically on multifamily housing affordability and evaluate opportunities to incorporate internationally recognized standards that maintain safety while reducing costs. These actions would help ensure that future code updates support the development of safe, high-quality, and affordable housing at the scale Americans need.

We appreciate your leadership and attention to this critical issue and look forward to hearing back.

Sincerely,



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



Michael V. Lawler
Member of Congress

⁵ <https://admin.centerforbuilding.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Elevators.pdf>

⁶ <https://naturalrefrigerants.com/news/ashrae-committee-chair-expects-2025-or-later-for-approval-of-higher-r290-charge-for-heat-pumps-in-u-s/>,
<https://admin.centerforbuilding.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Elevators.pdf>

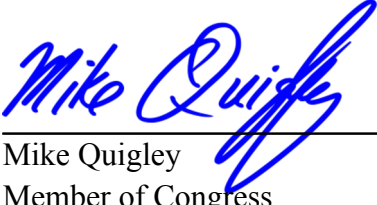
⁷ <https://www.iccsafe.org/committees/birc/>

⁸ <https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/IRC2021V3.0/chapter-1-scope-and-administration>

⁹ <https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/IBC2024V1.0/chapter-1-scope-and-administration>

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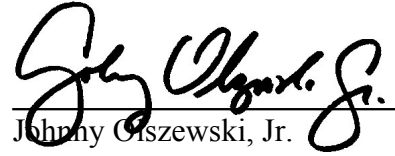
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