

To: DAS@ohiohome.org

Re: Ohio 2027-2028 Draft DAS Public Comment

From: Newport Partners LLC

Newport Partners, as the implementation contractor for **the U.S. Department of Energy's Efficient New Homes Program** (DENH) (formerly the Zero Energy Ready Home (ZERH) Program), the leading federal program for residential energy efficiency, congratulates OHFA on the forward-looking sustainability criteria in its 2026 Design and Architectural Standards (DAS). We support the references to the DENH/ZERH Program in the current 2026 DAS referenced in the QAP. In the Draft 2027 DAS, OHFA has removed the sustainability requirements under the New Construction Guidelines, just requiring new construction to comply with Ohio's energy code. We encourage OHFA to reinstate the DENH program and other green building programs back under the Guidelines for New Construction in the 2027 DAS (on an optional basis if needed), with the addition of the DENH program to the list of accepted Third Party Certifications under Section H. Sustainability.

The DOE Efficient New Homes program is a voluntary certification program that delivers lasting energy, health, and durability benefits through verified high-performance construction. Unlike measures that may be replaced over time, DENH emphasizes a few key permanent building features—such as a high-performance building envelope and efficient HVAC distribution—that provide lower energy use, greater comfort, and improved durability for decades. The program also requires independent third-party verification to confirm that homes are built as designed, providing a significantly higher level of quality assurance than code compliance alone. This verification ensures that efficiency and indoor air quality measures are properly installed and perform as intended, resulting in lower utility and maintenance costs, healthier living environments, and more reliable long-term outcomes for residents.

By reducing both overall energy consumption and peak electricity demand through better envelope performance, HVAC design, and air distribution systems, DENH homes also help reduce strain on the electric grid and preserve capacity for economic growth and other beneficial uses. These built-in benefits have led more than a dozen states to incorporate the DENH program into their affordable housing initiatives.

Recognizing the importance of construction cost control, the DENH program is built around practical, cost-effective technologies and construction practices that are readily available throughout the market. Its flexible certification framework allows project teams to optimize designs for their specific budgets and building types, which has enabled successful implementation in more than **100,000 certified homes nationwide**, spanning affordable and market-rate single-family and multifamily developments.

The DENH program publishes many [free resources online](#), including builder/developer training, technical support, and hundreds of real-world [project case studies](#). Our team is eager to support affordable projects working towards DENH certification and would be happy to collaborate with OHFA to provide Ohio-specific guidance and resources to developers who choose to earn DENH certification as part of their strategy.

We appreciate OHFA's commitment to expanding affordable housing and sustainability with the historic partnership with the DENH program, and the program reference in the current DAS. We respectfully request that the program reference be incorporated into the 2027 DAS to lock in significant long-term benefits. We would be happy to meet with OHFA staff to answer any questions related to the DENH program and our experience with other states that have integrated DENH into their QAPs.

Sincerely,

Jamie Lyons, P.E.

Vice President, Newport Partners