



Testimony in Support of An Act authorizing the Somerville Housing Authority to reconstruct the state-funded Clarendon Hill public housing project (H.4580)

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to the  
Joint Committee on Housing

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Chairman Honan, Chairman Boncore, and members of the Joint Committee, on behalf of MACDC and our members, I am testifying in support of An Act authorizing the Somerville Housing Authority to reconstruct the state-funded Clarendon Hill public housing project (H.4580).

Our members have long been engaged in addressing the need for affordable housing. MACDC represents all 62 state-certified CDCs in Massachusetts as well as 30 other non-profit organizations that share our mission of expanding economic opportunity across the Commonwealth.

The Clarendon Hill redevelopment is an important affordable housing preservation project that rebuilds 216 units of distressed state public housing while adding new affordable and market-rate apartments. Clarendon Hill is a Somerville Housing Authority (SHA) family community comprised of 216 state public housing units, providing homes for more than 500 people, including close to 200 children. The site's buildings, dating to the 1940s, are well past their useful life, have significant deferred maintenance, and do not comply with modern design, safety, and accessibility standards.

Since 2016, SHA's development team (Somerville Community Corporation, Preservation of Affordable Housing, and Redgate) has conducted an extensive community-engagement process to develop a revitalization plan for Clarendon. The project has the strong and active support of Clarendon Residents' United and has earned the support of neighbors, city officials, and state regulatory agencies. The resulting plan provides for phased demolition and 1-for-1 replacement of Clarendon's 216 public housing units, within a new 539-unit mixed-income community.

In May, after extensive engagement with the development team and stakeholders, the Somerville Board of Aldermen voted to advance a Chapter 149 home rule petition to the legislature to allow the project to move forward. This home rule petition must be adopted before the end of the current session for the project to move forward; failure to enact the

petition would jeopardize the project's funding commitments from Massachusetts DHCD (\$17 million) and the City of Somerville (\$10 million).

Clarendon's Chapter 149 home rule petition is modeled on similar petitions passed for more than ten recent public housing redevelopments. The petition gives SHA the ability to retain ownership of the Clarendon property, while leasing the site to its development team under binding land-use restrictions, to ensure the public housing units will be operated in compliance with the state's public housing laws and regulations "in the same manner and to the same effect" as if they were operated by SHA, in perpetuity.

No doubt, many of you are aware of the good work and strong track record of Somerville Community Corporation (SCC). Among many strong MACDC members, SCC stands out in several respects, and especially for the depth of community engagement in all its activities. This collaboration stands as a prime example for a strong public-private partnership, between a local housing authority, a private developer, and a community development corporation, to revitalize and renew valuable existing public housing. Over many years, SCC, like many strong CDCs, has demonstrated its commitment to provide thoughtfully restorative neighborhood development and thorough community engagement by meeting the needs for all its community's residents, and I respectfully urge this Committee – and the General Court – to advance this legislation quickly, so this important project for these families in the City of Somerville can move forward.

Respectfully submitted,

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