

February 27, 2015

Mayor Marty Walsh
Boston City Hall
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Mayor Walsh:

On behalf of all of the undersigned community-based and advocacy groups, we want to thank you for your continued commitment to supporting our most vulnerable populations in the City of Boston. We truly appreciate your dedication and support to addressing the critical issues that many in Boston face every single day.

Firstly, we are very grateful for the focus paid to Boston's linkage program in your recent housing plan, "Housing a Changing City: Boston 2030." We firmly believe that the city's linkage program is a critical tool that we must leverage to the fullest as we continue to develop in Boston at a historically high rate. Specifically, we were extremely pleased to see your plan include a commitment to automatically index linkage fees to inflation. As you know well, substantial linkage income has been lost over time when inflation adjustments were not made in a timely manner. In addition, we welcome the Administration's openness to lowering the 100,000 square feet exemption, and are excited to see what additional revenues that change could bring to the program. Clearly, the Linkage Program can be a critical part of the effort to meet your goal of increasing the City's funding for affordable housing by \$20 million per year. In fact, earlier this month, the Job Training Alliance (JTA) sent a letter to Chief Barros and Director Nguyen highlighting some of our questions and concerns around the city's linkage program, and requesting a meeting with them to discuss these issues. They graciously have agreed to meet with JTA in April, and we are looking forward to discussing these issues with them at that time. However, we wanted to take this opportunity for the broader community to also reach out to you directly, as we feel this is a particularly pressing issue. It is also our hope that by reaching out to you now and detailing some of our goals, it may further educate our April meeting and make it even more productive, as we have indicated to Director Nguyen.

Most critically, we continue to feel that **the linkage fees must be increased**. While the linkage fees have not even kept pace with inflation, the need for these funding streams has only increased. As you described in your recent Housing Report, median monthly rent in Boston has increased by 53.3% since 1998. Three of the five neighborhoods in Boston that were previously most affordable—Hyde Park, Mattapan, East Boston, Roxbury, and Dorchester—have the highest increases in rent from 2012 to 2013. Greater Boston residents continue to be pushed out of the city in order to find affordable housing opportunities. In addition, Federal funding for job training programs in Boston has decreased by over one-third since 2008. In FY15, there are only 220 federal training vouchers for the entire city of Boston. This means that there are only enough job training vouchers to train less than 1% of the unemployed population. In addition, there is no regular state funding to train unemployed workers to access skills needed for employment, despite continued vacancies. Furthermore, funds passed by the legislature for job training in the recent economic development bill were completely erased in this month's midyear 9C budget cuts. These deep cuts included an allocation of \$2.5 million to the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund and \$12.3 million for Advanced Manufacturing Technology and Hospitality Training, both of which were cut to zero. To address this growing need and the previous failures to index these linkage fees

to inflation, we propose an increase in both the affordable housing and job training linkage fees to \$12.00 (from its current \$8.34) and \$2.40 (from its current \$1.67) respectively.

Furthermore, we truly appreciate your desire for increased transparency around the fee collection and the use of those dollars. We applaud the effort of your Administration to ensure all of the linkage fees are properly billed and collected. With the limited funding available, it is vital that the entirety of linkage fees be collected and allocated towards the city's continued need for job training and affordable housing.

Finally, as you know, the Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) releases an annual report on the Neighborhood Housing Trust Fund and the funds that have come in through linkage fees. We would request that a similar annual report be compiled and issued around the Neighborhood Jobs Trust. Currently, it is extremely difficult to find information on the balance of the NJT and expected income from linkage fees. Because of this, it is difficult for job training providers to anticipate when sufficient funds may be collected such that a Request for Proposal is likely to be released.

We firmly agree with the Administration that increased transparency around the funding available and those projects funded through the NJT would be mutually beneficially to developers, the city of Boston, and housing and job training service providers seeking to obtain funding through this program.

We would truly appreciate a response to our concerns and an opportunity to sit down and discuss the city's plans for the linkage program going forward as well as a chance to further elaborate on our ideas for partnership with you. We look forward to your response. Please contact us through the Job Training Alliance's President, Aisha Necochea, at 617-695-9990 or at anecochea@iiboston.org.

As always, thank you for your continued commitment to ensuring Boston remains affordable for all of its residents.

Sincerely,

Joe Kriesberg, President, Mass. Assn of Community Development Corporations

Aisha Necochea, President, Job Training Alliance

Brenda Clement, Executive Director, Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA)

Lew Finfer, Executive Director, MA. Communities Action Network

Tom Callahan, Executive Director, Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance

Philip Giffey, Executive Director, Neighborhood of Affordable Housing

Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, CEO, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción

Joan Cirillo, CEO, Operation ABLE of Greater Boston

Jerry Rubin, President & CEO, JVS

Kathy Brown, Coordinator, Boston Tenant Coalition

Chau-ming Lee, Executive Director, Asian American Civic Association

Carolyn Benedict Drew, President & CEO, International Institute of New England

Hakim Cunningham, Project Director, Community Contractor Advocacy Project

Charmane Higgins, Executive Director, STRIVE

Craig Heinrichs, Interim President & CEO, YMCA of Greater Boston

Elisabeth D. Babcock MCRP, Ph.D, President & CEO, Crittenton Women's Union

Michelle Green, COO, Dorchester Bay EDC

Richard Thal, Executive Director, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation

Maarten Hemsley, Founder, Chairman & President, New England Center for Arts and Technology

Louvere Walker, Board President, Fenway Community Development Corporation

Carol Martinez, Executive Director, Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation

Janelle Chan, Executive Director, Asian Community Development Corporation

Walter Little, Executive Director, Quincy Geneva Development Corporation

Donna Brown, Executive Director, South Boston Neighborhood Development Corporation

Serena Powell, Executive Director, Community Work Services

Diana Kelly, President, Southwest Boston CDC

Libby Hayes, Executive Director, Homes for Families

Robert Terrell, Executive Director, Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston

Kate Flaherty, Chairperson, South Boston Families Advocating for Neighborhood Strength

Darnell Johnson, Coordinator, Boston Right to the City

Lydia Lowe, Executive Director, Chinese Progressive Association

Wendy Nicholas, Interim Executive Director, Fenway Community Development Corporation

Lisa Owens- Pinto, Executive Director, City Life/Vida Urbana

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Marvin Martin, Founding Member, Action for Regional Equity

Giles Li, Executive Director, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center

Joanne K. Hilferty, President and CEO, Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries, Inc.

Kevin Moloney, Chair, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council

Cc: John Barros, Chief of Economic Development, City of Boston
Sheila Dillon, Chief of Housing and Director of Neighborhood Development, City of Boston
Trinh Nguyen, Director, Office of Jobs & Community Services, City of Boston
Daniel Arigg Koh, Chief of Staff, Mayor Marty Walsh
Tim Sullivan, Chief of Staff for Intergovernmental Relations, City of Boston