



Testimony in Support of An Act Relative to Housing Production (H.673 / S.723)

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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 Relative to Housing Production (H.673 / S. 723), legislation filed by Chairman Honan and Sen. Dorcena Forry that provides new tools to help the Commonwealth meet its housing needs and provide more affordable housing.

MACDC represents all 60 state-certified CDCs in Massachusetts as well as 30 other non-profit organizations that share our mission of expanding economic opportunity across the Commonwealth. CDCs work collaboratively with residents and local governments to identify community goals and develop projects with strong local support. In 2016 alone, our members built or preserved 1,643 homes (including 814 homes) and provided 1,438 jobs to local workers in real estate construction projects, representing 34 projects and a \$186.6 million investment. The comprehensive set of new affordable housing tools, programs, and policies included in this bill will help CDCs and others to build additional housing across the Commonwealth and will help to generate the additional benefits that flow from a range of housing options: higher educational levels, improved health outcomes, efficient-energy consumption, and improved public safety.

In a recent convening on the challenges of developing affordable housing in the suburbs, MACDC members identified obstacles, ranging from unjustified delays in reviewing projects (which drive up the cost of housing) to moratoriums on multifamily housing. The bill's requirement that local zoning ordinances and bylaws provide for a reasonable opportunity to build multifamily housing developments will help low-and moderate-income families obtain access to more housing opportunities and advance the Commonwealth's fair housing goals.

There are several elements in the bill that are particularly important to MACDC members. The proposed legislation requires changes to municipal zoning ordinances while simultaneously provides financial incentives to municipalities. First, it requires that all MA municipal ordinances and bylaws provide for the reasonable opportunity to build multifamily housing developments and requires increased allowance of open space residential design ("cluster") development, while expanding Chapter 40S to reimburse communities for demonstrated increased school costs resulting from the production of any higher density developments. MACDC members support the application of an affordability threshold to the expansion of Chapter 40S beyond use in

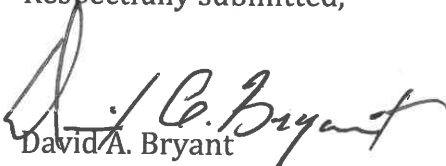
Chapter 40R districts; at least 20% of the units should be affordable, and this standard should apply to any other housing development that would trigger payments under Chapter 40S.

Second, our members were pleased that the Baker administration launched the Community Scale Housing Initiative this year. This legislation will promote rental developments between 5 and 20 units and provide more flexibility for creating mixed-income developments. The bill establishes a sustained Community Scale Housing Program and sets a goal for at least 1,000 units by 2022. It will be particularly useful in lower density rural and suburban areas and in Gateway Cities.

Finally, the balanced approach advanced by this legislation will encourage more housing and job creation, provide greater certainty for developers and property owners, enhance protections for natural and agricultural landscapes, and provide tools and incentives for local officials and citizens to guide and shape the future of their communities. Today, there is less housing production in Greater Boston than at almost any point in the last 50 years. Given our current fragmented system of land-use regulations and zoning ordinances and bylaws, a small determined group of naysayers can delay or block orderly growth and development from which many Massachusetts residents would benefit. Massachusetts must take seriously the need to further fair housing not only by enforcing anti-discrimination laws but also by adopting policies that promote mixed-income, racially diverse communities, consistent with a comprehensive and ambitious homeownership strategy. Massachusetts has the third highest racial homeownership gap in America and some of the highest home prices in the country. Unfortunately, we don't have enough homes that are priced at a level that moderate-income families can afford, and we have not dedicated resources to the production of new affordable homeownership opportunities.

MACDC members appreciate the leadership of Representative Honan and Senator Dorcena Forry in supporting affordable housing efforts over many years. Massachusetts has long been a national leader on affordable housing, but we have more work to do. We urge the Joint Committee to report favorably H.673 / S.723, so that all communities may benefit from the new tools, programs and financial incentives that will come with passage of this bill. We look forward to working with you all to advance this legislation and to maintain Massachusetts' leadership in the affordable housing development sector for years to come.

Respectfully submitted,


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