



Testimony on the Importance of the Affordable Housing Law, CH. 40B

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to the
Joint Committee on Housing
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Chairman Honan, Chairman Boncore, and Members of the Joint Committee, my name is David Bryant, and I am the Director of Advocacy for the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC). MACDC represents all 60 state-certified CDCs in Massachusetts as well as 30 other nonprofit 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, and to create opportunities for people of diverse incomes and backgrounds to access housing that is affordable, to benefit from economic opportunities, and to fully participate in the civic life of their communities.

On behalf of our member organizations, I am testifying to the importance of the Comprehensive Permit Law – also known as Ch. 40B or the Affordable Housing Law – to expanding affordable housing options for Massachusetts residents.

The Affordable Housing Law was enacted to address local zoning and land use restrictions that make it impossible or economically infeasible to build affordable housing under existing local zoning. The legislation codified the goal of ensuring that each community in the Commonwealth does its fair share to meet the housing needs of its residents. It is a critical piece of the puzzle, along with Ch. 40T, Ch. 40 R, and many other initiatives that this Committee has spearheaded and for which we support.

In 2016 alone, our members served 81,219 families with housing, jobs and other educational, counseling, technical assistance and housing-related services. CDCs built or preserved 1,643 homes and provided 1,438 jobs to local workers in real estate construction projects, representing 34 projects and a \$186.6 million investment.

Unfortunately, local barriers to affordable housing still exist in many communities across the Commonwealth today. Large-lot zoning and the prohibition of multi-family housing are still widespread and have greatly contributed to Massachusetts' high housing costs, low levels of housing production, and increased sprawl.

It is widely recognized that the Greater Boston region needs a dramatic increase in housing production to meet the existing and growing demand for housing, especially

rental housing. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and other experts suggest the region needs 435,000 new housing units, mostly multifamily, by 2040.

While many MACDC members have a pipeline of projects in Greater Boston, moving these projects forward takes a very long time and is very expensive, especially for smaller non-profit developers. Housing development in suburban communities is particularly challenging for many reasons, including the high cost of development, restrictive local zoning ordinances, opposition to and delays in reviewing projects, and moratoriums on multifamily housing.

Chapter 40B is an important tool for overcoming disparate impact policies and for affirmatively furthering fair housing by overcoming exclusionary zoning practices that drive-up housing costs, limit the rental housing supply, favor age-restricted housing over housing for families with children, and limit the supply of accessible housing. Chapter 40B has been an important producer of housing that expands options for low- and moderate-income families.

Earlier in this legislative session, MACDC testified in support of several bills that would spur greater housing production and legislation to overhaul and update our state's dated and confusing planning and zoning laws. We will continue to support thoughtful proposals that present a balanced, well-crafted approach to zoning and land use planning, and that offers greater certainty and predictability for developers and property owners, enhanced protections for important natural and agricultural landscapes, and an enhanced set of tools and incentives for local officials and citizens to guide and shape the future of their communities.

Our members understand the challenges presented by our local zoning laws, and we believe additional tools and more flexible practices will allow us to do more of these projects with greater efficiency. Currently, our regional housing supply does not meet the demand and there is no clear sign that enough towns are modifying local zoning to permit multifamily housing, and to allow the more sustainable rental options that working families and seniors need. In the absence of such reforms, the Comprehensive Permit remains an essential tool to provide the flexible zoning necessary to build multifamily housing that is affordable and for diversifying our communities' housing choices.

Respectfully submitted,

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