

Western Massachusetts Housing Coalition (WMHC)

Top Affordable Homes Act Priorities

The Western Massachusetts Housing Coalition (WMHC) has developed detailed and summary recommendations for the Affordable Homes Act to ensure the bill fully works for our region. We offer this short list of priorities below to support our legislators' advocacy for the provisions most important to our affordable housing needs in western Massachusetts.

First and foremost, we want to emphasize our unified and vigorous support for the entirety of this \$4.1 billion bond authorization.

In addition to the full authorization, the Western Massachusetts Housing Coalition's highest priorities include:

- **Transfer Fee for Affordable Housing:** remove the minimum sales price of \$1 million as a threshold for allowing a transfer fee and replace it with a mechanism that will make the transfer fee available to all communities; amend "regional affordable housing commission/fund" language to allow rural communities to create such funds via inter-municipal agreements.
- **Commonwealth Builder:** remove the 10-unit minimum and open the program to a wider range of communities, including economically distressed rural communities.
- **Homeownership Tax Credit:** remove the 10-unit minimum and ensure the program is available to a wide range of communities, including economically distressed rural communities, and to nonprofit developers.
- **Seasonal Communities:** expand the Seasonal Communities Coordinating Committee to an Office of Rural and Seasonal Communities that will ensure set asides for rural and seasonal communities are included in the state's Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP).
- **HousingWorks:** expand eligibility to include septic and water projects for HousingWorks Infrastructure funding.
- **Public Housing:** revise the funding formula for small and rural housing authorities to account for the total number of buildings and developments managed, and enact legislative changes so housing authorities can efficiently use of capital funding, including: preference for mixed-finance developments that retain and replace public housing units; remove the home rule petition requirement for housing authorities to merge; and allow for c. 149 procurement exemption for public housing redevelopment and new development.
- **Eviction record sealing:** allow automatic sealing in certain cases, such as no-fault evictions and judgments in favor of the tenant.
- **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):** allow ADUs as-of-right in single-family zoning districts.

We recognize that this list is not comprehensive, and we are thankful to our statewide partners who are championing additional priorities, including **MassNAHRO's leadership on the full \$1.6 billion authorization for public housing and MACDC's leadership on extending and expanding CITC**. We will continue to echo and relay those priorities as this process unfolds.