



The Hon. Susan L. Moran
Chair, Joint Committee on Revenue
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

The Hon. Mark J. Cusack
Chair, Joint Committee on Revenue
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

The Hon. Michael D. Brady
Vice Chair, Joint Committee on Revenue
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

The Hon. David Paul Linsky
Vice Chair, Joint Committee on Revenue
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

October 31, 2023

RE: S1771/H2747 An Act granting a local option for a real estate transfer fee to fund affordable housing

Dear Chair Moran, Chair Cusack, Vice Chair Brady, and Vice Chair Linsky:

On behalf of The Greater Boston Food Bank, I thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony support of S1771/H2747 “An Act granting a local option for a real estate transfer fee to fund affordable housing.” This local option bill would enable any municipality in Massachusetts to enact a local option transfer fee to fund affordable housing.

GBFB knows the scale of the housing crisis in Massachusetts. One in three of our neighbors is facing food insecurity, and rates are higher when specifically focusing on Black, Hispanic, and LGBTQ+ neighbors¹. 64% of food insecure households had to choose between paying for food and paying for their rent or mortgage in 2022. Housing costs are eating away at our neighbors’ purchasing power and causing them to seek relief from GBFB’s partner agencies. While we are proud to distribute 85+ million pounds of food each year, we know that policy change, including the expansion of affordable housing, is fundamental to tackling hunger and poverty at their root causes across the Commonwealth.

¹ [Ending-Hunger-Together Opportunities-to-Improve-Food-Equity-and-Access.pdf \(gbfb.org\)](#)

At our 117,000 square foot warehouse in South Bay, situated adjacent to the homelessness and addiction crisis near Melnea Cass and Massachusetts Avenue, our team members and partner agencies coming from near and far to pick up food sees the devastating effects of a lack of affordable housing, among other services, every day.

This bill confronts the housing crisis with a local option tailored to community needs. GBFB operates in 190 cities and towns across Eastern Massachusetts, distributing food to partner agencies in diverse municipalities that each have unique contexts but are united by the wider statewide housing crisis. From urban cities to rural towns, GBFB provides food to 600,000 people every month. Ten municipalities out of the eleven who have already filed Transfer Fee Home Rule Petitions are within GBFB's service area, from Boston to Martha's Vineyard, and many more towns and cities are in conversations to file their own petitions. Giving communities autonomy to determine the local transfer fee will optimize the opportunity to expand affordable housing options in each municipality.

We are grateful for the Governor's support for this legislation and for supporting temporary housing options for the influx of recent arrivals to Massachusetts. We must continue to look at sustainable policy solutions and urge the Committee to favorably report out **S1771/H2747 "An Act granting a local option for a real estate transfer fee to fund affordable housing."** Our communities need action to expand housing options and reduce poverty in Massachusetts so that fewer of our neighbors must spend sleepless nights wondering whether they should choose between paying for housing or for food.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Catherine D'Amato". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Catherine D'Amato
President and CEO
The Greater Boston Food Bank