



The Hon. Lydia Edwards
Chair, Joint Committee on Housing
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

The Hon. James Arciero
Chair, Joint Committee on Housing
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

The Hon. John F. Keenan
Vice Chair, Joint Committee on Housing
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

The Hon. Meghan Kilcoyne
Vice Chair, Joint Committee on
Housing
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

January 31, 2024:

Re: H. 4138, Affordable Homes Act

Dear Chair Edwards, Chair Arciero, Vice Chair Keenan, and Vice Chair Kilcoyne

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of The Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB) in support of **H. 4138, Affordable Homes Act**, introduced by Governor Maura Healey.

GBFB is the largest hunger relief organization in New England and among the largest food banks in the country. GBFB distributes more than 85 million healthy meals annually through a network of nearly 600 partner agencies in 190 cities and towns across Eastern Massachusetts. Monthly, we are serving approximately 600,000 individuals, including vulnerable populations of seniors, veterans, college students, children, and families. Our SNAP outreach program assists neighbors in applying for needed nutrition benefits, and in the past year, the number of applications that GBFB has supported has doubled in response to increased need.

According to [GBFB's statewide research](#), one in three of our neighbors is facing food insecurity, and rates are higher when specifically focusing on Black, Hispanic, and LGBTQ+ neighbors. But we know from conversations with our neighbors and partner agencies that the cost of food is not the only obstacle to food security. In fact, one of the major causes of food insecurity is the cost of housing. 64% of food insecure households in Massachusetts had to choose between paying for food and paying for their rent or mortgage in 2022. Every dollar a household spends on housing is a dollar that they may not have to spend on food, and so our neighbors are seeking out our nearly 600 partner agencies across Eastern Massachusetts for relief.

Additionally, GBFB recognizes the higher rate of food insecurity among Massachusetts' most vulnerable populations is not circumstantial. Barriers to home ownership, historically through redlining and unjust zoning practices, are a major root cause of hunger. So long as affordable

housing and homeownership continues to be unattainable for working families across the state, the racial wealth gap will only continue to widen.

GBFB has already submitted testimony to the Joint Committee on Revenue in favor of the Local Option for Housing Affordability, adding a new tool to municipal toolkits in the real estate transfer fee which towns from Boston to Martha's Vineyard have already requested. The Affordable Homes Act goes further, however, with capital authorizations, tax credits, support for development, and tenant protections in addition to the transfer tax. All 190 of the towns and cities within GBFB's service area stand to enhance and expand their affordable housing stock through the Affordable Homes Act. GBFB can best achieve our mission to End Hunger Here with the Legislature's support in preventing our neighbors from making tough choices between food and housing. 200,000 new units are needed to accommodate the Commonwealth's growth by 2030 – there is no time to wait.

We urge the committee to favorably report out the Affordable Homes Act.

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