



March 27, 2023

Senator Nick Collins, Senate Chairman
Rep. Antonio Cabral, House Chairman
Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight
State House
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Re: House Bill No. 43, An Act to create the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities and to rename the Executive Office of Economic Development

Dear Chairmen Collins and Cabral:

On behalf of the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Massachusetts (HBRAMA), I wish to convey our strong support for House Bill No. 43, *An Act to create the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities and to rename the Executive Office of Economic Development*.

The HBRAMA is a statewide trade association that is affiliated with both local homebuilder associations and the National Association of Home Builders. The more than 1,700 member companies of the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Massachusetts are involved in all aspects of the development, construction and sale of new single-family homes, townhomes, condominiums and apartments. The HBRAMA is committed to expanding housing opportunities for individuals and families of all incomes throughout Massachusetts.

One of the lessons learned from the coronavirus pandemic, is that housing is a social justice, public health and economic development imperative. That is why the HBRAMA is grateful to Governor Healey and Lt. Governor Driscoll for their commitment to increasing housing production and making it a priority of their administration. This legislation, creating a new secretariat of Housing and Livable Communities, will provide the singular focus within the Executive Branch to finally address the Commonwealth's long-standing failure to produce sufficient new housing to meet the needs of its citizens.

While new rental housing is desperately needed, for seniors, young workers and families of low and moderate-income, homeownership is the key to building wealth. The HBRAMA believes the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities can lead in breaking down state and local barriers to new single-family home construction that will provide meaningful opportunities for first-time and first-generation homebuyers to own their own home.

Suburban, exurban and rural communities throughout Massachusetts have long maintained land use practices such as large lot zoning, lengthy permitting processes, and unnecessary and costly

environmental regulations, that prevent our members from producing homes that would be affordable to those of modest means. According to the Urban Institute, the homeownership rate in Massachusetts in 2020 among White households was 69.9%, compared to 38.3% for Black households and a mere 27.3% for Hispanic households. These statistics expose the indisputable fact that the local policies, practices and decisions of many towns, whether in their effect or intent, discriminate against minorities. In this regard, the provision in House Bill No. 43 to create a new “Housing Works” program, modeled on the popular and successful Mass Works program, deserves special attention from your committee.

Unlike Mass Works, “Housing Works” will be dedicated to exclusively funding municipal infrastructure that supports new or redeveloped housing. While the lack of adequate infrastructure to support new housing production can sometimes be a legitimate local concern, it is all too often used as a pretext to thwart it. With adequate funding by the Legislature, the “Housing Works” program can not only provide another important financial incentive for communities to facilitate new housing, but eliminate one excuse from them not doing so.

For these and other reasons, the HBRAMA respectfully urges your committee to promptly recommend passage of this historic legislation.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeffrey A. Brem". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

Jeffrey A. Brem
President

C: Yvonne Hao, Secretary, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
Jennifer Maddox, Undersecretary, Department of Housing and Community Development