



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Housing
In Support of H.675 An Act financing the production and preservation of housing
for low and moderate income residents

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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports H.675 An Act financing the production and preservation of housing for low and moderate income residents. Borrowing by the state to maintain and improve the existing affordable housing and to build much-needed new units is essential to continuing the Commonwealth's commitment to decent housing for those who cannot afford market prices. We need to issue affordable housing bonds on a regular basis to encourage consistent commitment from planners and builders.

Since previously approved authorizations for affordable housing bonding are running out, it is critical to increase the capacity to provide subsidized housing for individuals and families with incomes too low to rent adequate facilities on their own. The rate of poverty in Massachusetts was 11.5% in 2015 and has been this high for many years. Coupled with skyrocketing housing costs, this has meant that homelessness has doubled since the 1990s. Unfortunately, poverty and homelessness affect disproportionately more children than adults and often result in lifelong setbacks to their health and education. Older adults are also likely to have fixed incomes that have not kept up with inflated housing costs and often need subsidized units.

For a long time it has been particularly difficult for the families and professionals who work with vulnerable individuals and persons with disabilities to find appropriate housing for them as they become adults. Persons with mental illness, physical disabilities such as blindness, or intellectual disabilities often face long waiting periods or have to live far from families and support systems they know. These individuals deserve to be housed where they can participate in community life, to the extent of their ability. As the number of persons living with physical disabilities grows due to better medical care and longer life spans, it is also critical to build and remodel more handicapped-accessible housing and facilities, as provided by the bill. The League supports addressing current deficiencies in these kinds of specialized affordable housing; we urge you to provide adequate designated funds in the final bill.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts appeals to the Committee to take very seriously the need for publicly subsidized housing units and the benefits to the quality of life for all of us when we know there are housing options for individuals and families most in need. We all benefit when the Commonwealth supports a decent standard of housing for all our residents. Please do all that you can to see that the bond authorizations proposed in H.675 are enacted.

Thank you for your consideration.