



August 17, 2020

Conference Committee for H.4887/S.2842:

Rep. Aaron Michlewitz, Rep. Ann-Margaret Ferrante, Rep. Donald Wong, Sen. Michael Rodrigues, Sen. Eric Lesser, Sen. Patrick O'Connor

Dear Conference Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts requests that, as you reconcile these two bills, you keep in mind the crisis in housing that has faced the Commonwealth for many years. The League believes that government policies should work “to provide a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family.” As you undoubtedly know, we have had thousands of families who have been homeless in every recent year, in addition to most lower-income persons and families struggling to find homes they can afford. These bills provide the best option we have to rectify this situation.

We ask that you make it easier for all communities to add to their stock of subsidized affordable housing because experience shows the forces that work to keep such housing out usually succeed, even when majorities are in favor. Affordable housing belongs in every community, not just in the larger cities. Bonding and appropriations designated for affordable housing are also critical to making more units available.

We also recognize that more housing needs to be produced to meet the needs of the majority of the population who have income from their work or retirement and should not need to be subsidized. Priced out of the market are many young families who need “starter homes,” workers earning low wages, professionals still paying off college loans, and elders who want to downsize. The actual shortage of housing, particularly multi-family and rental developments, has been well-documented by our planning agencies such as the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). We cannot hope to reduce the numbers of homeless persons until there are homes they can move to, most realistically apartments with modest rents.

The first steps have been taken by the House and Senate. We appeal to you to put together the legislation to move the Commonwealth forward. The lack of housing production has been strangling the economy, and the coronavirus pandemic will make modest-priced housing even more critical to our recovery. We look forward to the strongest possible Economic Development bill.

Sincerely yours,

Judy Zaunbrecher and Elizabeth Foster-Nolan
Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

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