

MACDC's Comprehensive *Four-Step Agenda* to Meet Our Commonwealth's Housing Needs

Now is the time for the Massachusetts Legislature to enact this comprehensive four-step agenda that protects tenants, generates new revenue for affordable housing, expands housing opportunities, and restores hope to struggling neighborhoods and rural towns.

The Challenge for Housing Advocates

The time for action is now. Every day hard-working families across the Commonwealth are receiving eviction notices as rents go up and up. Every day investors beat out families by offering cash to sellers seeking to capitalize on today's high home prices. Every day the problem gets worse and we lose opportunities to address the crisis.

Our Solution: A Four-Step Agenda

Step One – Fix our zoning and land use laws, so we can expand housing opportunities. Urge Governor Baker and the Legislature to support Mayor Walsh's housing policy proposals, and to take additional steps to address the housing crisis facing our suburbs, Gateway Cities, and rural towns. We need comprehensive zoning reform that makes it easier for cities and towns to build new housing – as proposed in Governor Baker's Housing Choice bill – and creates the incentives and penalties necessary to ensure that other communities, in addition to Boston, add new housing, especially multifamily housing in smart growth locations.

Step Two - Protect tenants facing eviction and displacement. Mayor Marty Walsh has proposed legislation so that every low-income tenant in Massachusetts would have the right to legal counsel when facing an eviction. Currently, landlords almost always have an attorney and tenants rarely do. This imbalance yields predictable results. Several state legislators, along with Mayor Walsh, have proposed legislation that would give tenants the right to purchase their own buildings – possibly by partnering with a developer or nonprofit organization when owners put these properties up for sale.

Step Three – Secure new revenue to fund affordable housing. Few people realize that just 1% of the state's operating budget goes to housing compared to 40% for health care, even though poor housing is one of the key social factors that undermines good health. We must do better. We need to enact legislation this Session to enable cities and towns to generate new revenue for local housing needs, preserve funding for the CPA Trust Fund, and secure substantial new statewide revenue to address our housing crisis.

Step Four – Restore abandoned and poor-quality housing in weak housing markets. While much of our Commonwealth faces rapidly rising home prices, other communities in Massachusetts struggle with the challenges of weak real estate markets. Rep. Antonio Cabral and Sen. Brendan Crighton filed legislation calling for an ambitious neighborhood stabilization initiative to put these properties back to productive use.

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