



October 10, 2019

The Honorable Michael J. Rodrigues
Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Massachusetts State House
Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairman Rodrigues:

As you, your staff, and the Committee begin to consider the supplemental budget proposal filed by Governor Baker, we would like to highlight an important community economic development and public health priority for your consideration.

We were pleased to see that the Governor's proposal includes \$10 million for a down payment assistance program, in support of first-time homebuyers, and \$10 million to support the development of housing for extremely low-income (ELI) households. Despite Massachusetts' thriving economy, many families are unable to afford a place to live, and rent burden remains as a significant hardship for the lowest income households.

We regret that the Governor's proposal did not include additional funding for the *Get the Lead Out (GTLO) Loan Program*.

As we have discussed before, MACDC and its members view the ongoing need for lead-paint abatement as a compelling environmental justice challenge and a further impediment to access to fair housing across the state. Mr. Chairman, this is a statewide problem with extensive lead concentration in homes in 18 of 351 cities and towns and seven high-risk communities (Boston, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Somerville, and Worcester). In 2016, we had a very constructive dialogue with Mass Housing and other advocates which led to reforms of the *GTLO Program* that now make it easier to provide loans across the Commonwealth, and to improve health and safety for families in these communities. The program is even more important considering the DPH decision to lower the threshold at which children are deemed lead poisoned.

We respectfully request the Senate Committee on Ways and Means to provide \$5 million to recapitalize the *Get the Lead Out Loan Program* fund.

[7004-1966 For the loan program established pursuant to section 197E of chapter 111 of the General Laws for lead abatement throughout the commonwealth; provided, that the terms and conditions of such loans will be based on income eligibility criteria and include terms and plans that allow low-and moderate-income individuals to defer loan repayment until transfer of the property; provided further, that funds made available herein shall be administered by the department of housing and community development in consultation with the department of public health; provided further, that funds shall be disbursed from this item on a quarterly basis subject to a disbursement plan which shall be filed in advance with the house and senate committees on ways and means; provided further, that such disbursements shall be made upon demonstration of need by the entity selected by


the department to implement the program funded herein; and provided further, that funds received for the repayment of loans made under the provisions of this item may be retained and expended without further appropriations for the loan program established pursuant to said section 197E of said chapter 111.....\$5,000,000]

A recent report from Mass Housing indicates program growth year-over-year since 2012, and the fund balance through September 30, 2018, was just over \$2.1 million. In the first half of the year the balance dropped by almost \$800,000, and if this trend continues, by the end of calendar year 2019, we could face a balance of less than half a million dollars.

We are grateful to Mass Housing and the agencies for adopting administrative changes that have led to more successful implementation and distribution of program resources across the Commonwealth. We respectfully request recapitalized funding of at least \$5 million, which should extend the *GTLO Program* another three years.

Thank you for your kind consideration for our requests. We are grateful for your Committee's prior support for so many vital community economic development programs, and MACDC's members are looking forward to our continuing collaboration and productive partnership throughout the 2019 – 20 Legislative Session.

Sincerely,


David A. Bryant
Director of Advocacy