

MACDC's Lobby Day Priorities

April 28, 2020

The COVID-19 Pandemic has created a public health and economic crisis that will impact every person and community across the state, the country, and the world. As Community Development Corporations in Massachusetts, we are particularly focused on the communities in which we work and the people and small businesses that make our communities great places to live, work, and thrive. We know this pandemic will have a particularly significant impact on the most vulnerable among us. It will reveal and exacerbate the persistent racial and economic inequities in our society.

MACDC calls on our legislators to marshal the resources and to implement the policies needed to mitigate the economic crisis while continuing to take all necessary steps to protect public health. We issued a [broad set of policy recommendations](#) earlier this month and continue to work on all of them. For our Lobby Day on April 28, 2020, we are focusing on three urgent priorities.

Small Business Relief: MACDC has joined with 40+ community organizations to call for a \$150 Million Economic Relief and Recovery [program](#) for micro and small businesses. Two of the key elements of our proposal would strengthen the Commonwealth's outstanding network of CDCs, CDFIs and CBOs that serve communities of color, immigrants, rural towns, Gateway Cities, and other under-served communities:

- **\$10 million in supplemental funding to boost the existing [Small Business Technical Assistance Program](#)** to enable a diverse network of 45+ community-based organizations to meet the surge in demand coming from the thousands of small, underserved businesses that they serve, including those owned by people of color, women, immigrants, and low- or moderate-income people.
- **\$35 million to enable community development financial institutions (CDFI) to reach underserved populations**, such as women and minority-owned businesses, with creative and flexible loan or grant products and to leverage federal and private funding to support small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 Crisis (Governor Baker proposed expanding a [this program](#) in his Economic Development legislation filed before the crisis).

Housing Relief: MACDC is partnering with CHAPA, the Regional Housing Network, and others to advocate for the expansion of the [Residential Assistance for Families in Transition \(RAFT\)](#) with at least \$50 million in emergency funding in addition to the \$5 million already provided by Governor Baker. RAFT is a proven program that helps households with very low incomes remain housed. Considering the current public health and economic crisis, MACDC supports expanding eligibility for households up to 80% of the area median income, so they can pay rent, mortgages, and other housing expenses. We also support streamlining administrative requirements, so applicants can apply quickly and enabling them to apply electronically.

Neighborhood Stabilization: MACDC continues to advocate for *An Act Relative to Neighborhood Stabilization and Economic Development (H.177/S.1627)* which was filed long before the COVID-19 Crisis, but will take on even more importance in the context of the economic crisis. Lower-income neighborhoods in Gateway Cities and rural towns already struggled with weak housing markets, and aging housing stock. This problem is being exacerbated by the current crisis. This bill will empower cities, towns, CDCs and other stakeholders to restore vacant properties to productive use, rehab occupied properties that need repairs, and stabilize neighborhoods for the long term.

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