



Testimony in Support of An Act relative to community benefit districts (H.144)

David A. Bryant  
Director of Advocacy  
Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations  
to the  
Joint Committee on Community Development and Small Businesses  
Massachusetts General Court

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Chairwoman Ferrante, Chairwoman O'Connor Ives, and members of the Committee, my name is David Bryant, and I am the Director of Advocacy for the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC). MACDC is an association of mission-driven community development organizations dedicated to working together and with others to create opportunities for people of diverse incomes and backgrounds to access housing that is affordable, benefit from economic opportunities, and fully participate in the civic life of their communities.

On behalf of our eighty-nine member organizations, including all fifty-four state-certified CDCs, I am testifying in support of the proposed legislation to establish Community Benefit Districts (CBDs), a collaborative public-private-nonprofit partnership. I respectfully request that you report favorably on this bill, which will enable locally organized residents, business owners, nonprofit community-based organizations, governmental entities, educational and cultural organizations, and other stakeholders to improve coordination and promote local initiatives that strengthen existing small businesses and institutions, attract new investment, enhance community revitalization, and improve quality of life.

MACDC members appreciate the leadership of Senator Donoghue and Representative Crighton, who have championed for the establishment of community benefit districts, as well as the many legislators, who support enabling legislation to establish CBDs. CBDs have proven to be effective instruments to focus and implement a shared interest for public safety, streetscape improvements, neighborhood promotion, and community-building events. The House and Senate companion legislation (S.1070) afford cities and towns the opportunity to implement a shared vision for promoting and sustaining a neighborhood's revitalization efforts.

MACDC members are dedicated to creating places of opportunity across the state where all people can live with dignity while participating in and benefiting from our Commonwealth's economy. One of the ways that our members work toward this vision is by helping local businesses to start, grow and thrive. Last year, our members worked with 1,304 small businesses, many of them local retail outlets in neighborhood business

districts. A great example of these efforts is a project completed recently by MACDC member The Neighborhood Corporation (TNC) in Taunton. TNC in partnership with Taunton Business Improvement District developed The Barton Lofts, the first private investment of new mixed-use development in nearly twenty years, and a cornerstone for that community's long term vision of "work force" housing and promoting a creative economy movement in the City of Taunton.

While we work to help business owners do everything they can to succeed, we know that ultimately their success depends on the success of the local business district and the larger neighborhood. A business cannot thrive if customers are reluctant to come to the district due to crime, a lack of cleanliness, inadequate parking or a poor mix of businesses. CBDs can tackle these problems systematically and develop long term sustainable solutions. CBDs also can leverage a districts assets, through marketing, branding, special events and other strategies that attract new customers and businesses. CBDs are well positioned to do this because their leadership and funding would come from within the district.

We urge the committee to report favorably H.144, so that communities that adopt CBDs may be assured of a set of vital tools to accomplish these essential community benefits.

Respectfully submitted,

David A. Bryant  
Director of Advocacy  
Massachusetts Association of  
Community Development Corporations  
15 Court Square, Suite 600  
Boston, MA 02108

(617)379-5927  
davidb@macdc.org