



MACDC 2021 Advocacy Agenda

MACDC's policy agenda in 2021 will address both the immediate needs created by the COVID-19 Pandemic and economic crisis, as well as the long-term structural issues in our economy that have been our focus for years. Given the tremendous uncertainty about the course of the pandemic and the economic recovery as well as the extent and nature of Federal relief, MACDC will remain nimble and flexible as we pursue our policy agenda. MACDC and our members will focus on the following priorities:

- I. **COVID-19 Response.** The COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause major economic challenges for our state, in particular for low-wage workers, communities of color, immigrants and small businesses. Our top priority for 2021 will be to help mitigate these impacts and ensure an equitable response and recovery. While the precise elements of this agenda are subject to continual adjustment based on evolving circumstances, our priorities will include:
 1. **Housing Stability:** Support policies that prevent evictions and foreclosures during and after the health emergency, including:
 - i. Extending the eviction moratorium and procedural protections for tenants
 - ii. Mortgage forbearance
 - iii. Full funding for the state's Eviction Diversion Initiative, including legal representation and mediation services.
 - iv. Relief payments for tenants, landlords and homeowners
 - v. Efficient and timely deployment of Federal relief dollars.
 2. **Small Business Relief and Recovery:** Support policies and programs that help small businesses, especially those owned by people of color, low- and moderate-income people and other vulnerable businesses.
 - i. Advocate for additional grant and loan programs to help businesses survive and recover.
 - ii. Implement new small business support programs funded in FY 21 budget and Economic Development Bond Bill
 - iii. Full funding for MGCC's Small Business Technical Assistance program
 - iv. Ensure vulnerable businesses are equitably supported as the economy reopens
 3. **Equitable Public Health Response:** Ensure public health policies related to vaccines, testing and reopening are implemented equitably.
- II. **Equitable Small Business Development.** The COVID-19 pandemic hurt nearly every small business in the Commonwealth, but it has had a particularly devastating impact of those owned by people of color, immigrants and low- and moderate-income people and those located in underserved communities. These same businesses often had a harder time accessing COVID-19 related relief dollars from both the state and federal government. Of course, these disparities did not begin with COVID-19 so we also intended to address long-standing structural issues so we can advance an inclusive and equitable small business recovery.
 1. Increase in funding for the [Small Business Technical Assistance](#) program from \$5.1 million to \$10 million per year. This program now funds 63 CDCs, CDFIs and other

community-based organizations all of whom are helping underserved entrepreneurs launch and grow small businesses. The program is critical to enabling our small businesses to recover and thrive after pandemic.

2. Implement the \$17.5 million in the FY 21 budget to provide [capital grants to CDFIs](#) and CDCs that offer small business loans and secure at least \$7.5 million in FY 22 capital funding as authorized in the Economic Development Bond Bill.
3. Implement new programs created in FY 21 budget and Economic Development Bond bill that will offer matching grants to small businesses, support closing the digital divide for priority businesses and other COVID-19 Relief funding.
4. Secure at least \$3 million in new capital funding to support the [Mass Food Trust](#), a program administered on behalf of the state by Franklin County CDC and LEAF, which provides grants and loans to expand access to healthy foods in lower-income communities.
5. Enact broad economic development legislation called “An Act to Promote Inclusive Entrepreneurship and Economic Justice” filed by Senator Lesser that aligns with recommendations in soon to be released MassINC report that will drive state economic policy to focus more explicitly on diversity, equity and inclusion, strengthen the state’s supplier diversity efforts and help revitalize business nodes in low-income areas.

III. **HERO Campaign:** The likely passage of the new Climate Road Map legislation will accelerate the Commonwealth’s drive to a carbon-free future. MACDC believes that aggressive climate action is essential and that it must be coupled with efforts to ensure housing affordability and equity. Toward that end, MACDC is a founding member of the [HERO Coalition](#) – Housing and Environmental Revenue Opportunities – which is comprised of housing, climate, faith-based, labor, and social justice groups working together to secure a major new revenue stream to support investments in affordable housing, climate resiliency and mitigation. This legislation would [double the deeds excise tax](#) and dedicate 50% (approx. \$150 million/yr.) to housing and 50% to climate. This legislation would be the single biggest increase in state funding for affordable housing in decades. It would also be a major step toward a future where Massachusetts has a growing stock of climate resilient, decarbonized housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income people.

IV. **Affordable Housing Production and Preservation:** The severe housing affordability crisis that existed before COVID will continue to hurt families, seniors, and our economy long after the COVID crisis is over. Therefore, MACDC will continue to advocate for increased resources to support affordable housing production and preservation.

1. **HERO Campaign** – as noted above, the HERO Campaign could provide the single biggest increase in housing resources in decades.
2. **Transfer Tax Enabling Act** – MACDC supports adoption of a statewide enabling act that allows municipalities to implement a tax on high-value real estate transfers to fund affordable housing.
3. **Capital Funding** – Most of the state funds for affordable housing production and preservation come from the state’s capital budget. In FY 21, the Governor allocated \$128 million for private affordable housing programs. The newly enacted economic

development bond bill includes new programs that could help, but only if the Governor increases the bond allocation for housing significantly.

4. **Program Design** – MACDC will work with DHCD and state housing agencies to ensure that the new programs created by the economic development bill are designed effectively and implemented quickly. This includes new funding for transit-oriented development, resilient housing and neighborhood stabilization.
5. **Housing Funding** – MACDC will join with allies in the Building Blocks Coalition to fully fund the MRVP program for both existing and new vouchers, reducing the percentage of income that tenants pay under the program and for full funding of other housing programs in the FY 22 budget. We will also support legislation to reform the MRVP program and put it into state law (not just the budget).

- V. **Neighborhood Stabilization & Healthy Housing:** MACDC will work to accelerate the renovation of vacant and blighted homes in weaker market areas of the state so they offer healthy, safe, energy efficient homes to the community, while also working to expand efforts to renovate older homes in need of investment. This will include:
 1. Requesting that Governor Baker allocate at least \$10 million each for the newly created Neighborhood Stabilization program at DHCD and the Under-utilized property program at Mass Development.
 2. Advocating for \$750,000 in continued funding for the Neighborhood Hub in the FY 22 budget.
 3. Advocating for passage of [legislation](#) which will make it easier for municipalities to acquire long vacant properties in need of renovation, and establishes a working group to address the inequities in the building code as it applies to weak market neighborhoods.
 4. Seeking new funding for housing rehabilitation that will make housing healthier, safer, and more energy efficient.
- VI. **Tenant protections:** MACDC is supporting legislation to protect tenants from evictions and displacement, including:
 1. **Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA)** – this bill would prevent displacement by helping tenants purchase their building (at a fair market price) if/when the owner puts it up for sale. The legislature passed the bill in the last session but Governor Baker vetoed it.
 2. **Right to Counsel** – we will continue to support efforts to create a [right to counsel for tenants](#) facing eviction.
 3. **Eviction Sealing** – we will [support legislation](#) that seals certain eviction records so that tenants have an opportunity to find new housing.
- VII. **Racial Homeownership Gap:** We will be working to close the racial homeownership gap by:
 1. Advocating that the FY22 State budget authorizes the Division of Banks to retain at least \$2.85 from mortgage originator fees, and in addition requires DOB to award at least \$1.5 million in Chapter 206 grants to fund first-time homeownership education programs and foreclosure prevention counseling centers throughout the Commonwealth from these retained fees.

2. Advocating for the state to continue building new affordable homeownership units after it fully implements the \$60 million Commonwealth Builder program.
3. Increase buying power of low- and moderate-income households via down-payment assistance programs and improved mortgage products.
4. Explore how the state's homeownership programs can help families build home equity over time as a way to reduce the racial wealth gap in our state.

VIII. Financial Prosperity

1. Expand the state Earned Income Tax Credit program
2. Advocate for a major initiative to expand tenant participation in the Federal Family Self Sufficiency program.
3. Support other income supports for low- and moderate-income people, such as legislation to create a matched savings account program.

IX. **Rural Development.** In October 2019, the MA Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) released its [Rural Policy Plan for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts](#). This Plan made policy recommendations related to the unique issues and challenges faced by rural communities across the Commonwealth and addresses 14 focus areas that were identified through listening sessions held across the state in late 2018. MACDC will work with the members of the RPAC and rural Regional Planning Agencies in its efforts to engage legislative and administration stakeholders to fulfill and implement the Plan recommendations, in particular the creation of an Office of Rural Policy. We will also work to ensure that the \$20 million authorized in the economic development bill for rural development is fully funded in FY 22.

X. **Land Use and Zoning:** MACDC will work with CHAPA and others to advocate for land use and zoning policies that eliminate exclusionary zoning and expand housing opportunities throughout the Commonwealth. This will include supporting bills to promote housing production filed by Reps Honan & Vargas and Sen. Boncore, to prohibit exclusionary zoning filed by Rep. Barber and Sen. Chang-Diaz, and to affirmatively further fair housing filed by Reps. Rogers & Santiago and Sen. Boncore.

XI. **Climate & Clean Energy:** We will advocate for new resources that will enable existing and future affordable housing to adopt renewable energy technologies, minimize their energy needs and move toward a carbon free future. We will also support program initiatives that help to retrofit existing housing in ways that reduce its carbon footprint and makes it climate resilient while ensuring affordability for low- and moderate-income people.