

July 29, 2024

The Honorable Senator Warren
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

(delivered electronically)

Dear Senator Warren,

In communities across Massachusetts, housing costs are holding families back. Rents and home prices are unaffordable and rising, pushing the American dream out of reach for too many of our neighbors. The legacy of housing discrimination is apparent across the country, where communities of color have routinely been denied the opportunity to build wealth. Cities need more tools from the federal government to adequately address this housing crisis and invite smart, sound investments in our neighborhoods. We write to express our support for the *American Housing and Economic Mobility Act*. It is a bold and comprehensive proposal that will help lead our Commonwealth – including the cities we represent – out of the housing crisis facing the country.

All across Massachusetts, working families are struggling to afford dignified housing. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, families need an income of more than \$86,000 to afford a two-bedroom apartment in Massachusetts. We know that many renters are struggling with unaffordable rents and end up paying much of their incomes to landlords. As is often the case, these burdens fall hardest on our lowest-income neighbors. Sixty four percent of extremely low income individuals in Massachusetts pay more than 50% of their incomes on rent. Home prices in Massachusetts have risen more than 9% since last year, putting homeownership out of reach even for those who have been able to save up for a down payment.

The *American Housing and Economic Mobility Act* addresses these exploding costs by making a historic investment of more than \$500 billion dollars to develop housing for poor, working, and middle-class families. Nationwide, the bill would propel the production of nearly 3 million new homes and bring down the cost of rent. The bill also creates a Local Housing Innovation grant program, which rewards cities for amending land use laws to allow for the production of well-located affordable housing with funding to strengthen infrastructure, build schools, and improve roads. This program will also help construct affordable rental units and homes accessible for first-time homebuyers, keeping our neighborhoods intact while creating a path for new families to build strong economic futures.

In addition, this bill addresses decades of discriminatory federal housing policy and promotes homeownership. During the middle of the 20th century, federal government policies deprived Black and Hispanic families of the subsidies their white neighbors used to build wealth and buy homes in communities throughout the country – including cities across Massachusetts. The legacy of that discrimination persists in the growing gap between the wealth of Black and white families. While the median wealth of white families in metropolitan Boston is \$247,500, the median wealth of Black families is close to zero, according to research by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. Your bill takes important steps to address this by providing down payment assistance for first-generation and first-time homebuyers. It also strengthens critical civil rights laws like the Fair Housing Act and the Community Reinvestment Act.

As mayors of cities across Massachusetts, we feel the weight of this housing crisis in our communities, and we need bold solutions. We are proud to support the *American Housing and Economic Mobility Act* because its investments are equal to the scale of the crisis our cities face.

We look forward to working with you to make it law.

Sincerely,

Mayor Chris Johnson
Agawam

Mayor John Vieau
Chicopee

Mayor Melinda Barrett
Haverhill

Mayor Cassandra Gove
Amesbury

Mayor Nicole LaChapelle
Easthampton

Mayor Joshua Garcia
Holyoke

Mayor Cathleen DeSimone
Attleboro

Mayor Carlo DeMaria
Everett

Mayor Jared Nicholson
Lynn

Mayor Michelle Wu
Boston

Mayor Paul Coogan
Fall River

Mayor Gary Christenson
Malden

Mayor Erin Joyce
Braintree

Mayor Sam Squailia
Fitchburg

Mayor Breanna Lungo-Koehn
Medford

Mayor Robert Sullivan
Brockton

Mayor Michael Nicholson
Gardner

Mayor Jennifer Grigoraitis
Melrose

Mayor E. Denise Simmons
Cambridge

Mayor Virginia DeSorgher
Greenfield

Mayor Neil Perry
Methuen

Mayor Jon Mitchell
New Bedford

Mayor Ted Bettencourt
Peabody

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne
Somerville

Mayor Sean Reardon
Newburyport

Mayor Peter Marchetti
Pittsfield

Mayor Domenic Sarno
Springfield

Mayor Ruthanne Fuller
Newton

Mayor Patrick Keefe Jr.
Revere

Mayor William Reichelt
West Springfield

Mayor Jennifer Macksey
North Adams

Mayor Dominick Pangallo
Salem

Mayor Joseph Petty
Worcester

Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra
Northampton