



**Metro Housing|Boston's Testimony Supporting  
"An Act Financing the Production and Preservation of  
Housing for Low and Moderate Income Residents" (H. 4134)**

**by  
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Good morning Chairman Keenan, and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to testify today. Metro Housing|Boston is pleased to support H.4134.

Metro Housing is a leading nonprofit dedicated to connecting the residents of Greater Boston with safe, decent homes they can afford. We work with residents in Boston and 32 surrounding communities. We work with property owners and tenants. The foundation of our work is our rental assistance program where we provide rental assistance to more than 9,600 households, and work with 4,300 property owners. Building on this effort, we also provide services to stabilize lives in housing with information, referral, and supports, responding to in excess of 10,000 housing inquires annually.

Metro Housing serves as a vital link in the Commonwealth's housing delivery system. We work closely with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the state legislature on housing solutions for those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The resources contained in the bills before you today are important tools that allow us to provide real opportunities for our friends and neighbors who seek housing assistance.

Metro Housing's testimony today is twofold. First, we will briefly describe the need based on what we see every day. Second, we will demonstrate the importance of the Home Modification Loan Program and provide a specific example of how it has been used.

Massachusetts ranks among the top states when it comes to the cost to rent a home. As a result, we have a high rate of homelessness and many people in need of housing they can afford.

According to the HUD Annual Homelessness Report presented to Congress in 2016, Massachusetts had 19,608 people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. Additionally, Massachusetts ranks third in the nation in terms of the number of homeless families with children. With your leadership and guidance, the commonwealth

has provided additional resources for homelessness prevention, rapid re-housing, and state rental assistance. However, our current lists for assistance show that more needs to be done.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) is the most widely used form of rental assistance. At Metro Housing there are 34,437 households on our waitlist. Applicants fortunate enough to be receiving vouchers now applied for them back in 2007. In 2014 when Metro Housing offered a small number of vouchers through the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), we received more than 10,000 applications. Funding the production programs in the housing bond bill and the public housing modernization program will increase the supply of housing and, hopefully, help address some of the unmet needs.

Metro Housing recently moved in to a new office in Roxbury Crossing where the foot traffic at our front desk has doubled compared to our previous location downtown. As part of the financing for the building, our partners, Mission Hill Neighborhood Development Corporation, used LIHTC for the 40 affordable housing units constructed as part of the project.

The specific program that we want to call attention to is the Home Modification Loan Program. Metro Housing has the privilege to administer the Home Modification Loan Program in our region. Over the last eleven years we have assisted 282 families and provided more than \$6 million so that people with disabilities and limited mobility could modify their homes and avoid the need to enter expensive hospitals or nursing homes.

The HMLP benefits people like Ivan who, at eight years old, is unable to walk. He is also blind and does not talk. Ivan's parents used a low interest loan from the HMLP to build a wheelchair ramp and an accessible bedroom and bathroom that can accommodate Ivan's wheelchair thereby allowing him to live at home.

There are 281 other families in our region who, just like Ivan's, have benefited from this program. The loans will be paid back when the homes are sold. Recapitalizing the HMLP will ensure that we can continue to support and stabilize families with members who have a cognitive or physical disability.

Thank you for your support of affordable housing and for your work with Metro Housing. Without stable housing, people cannot work, children do not thrive, and education and training is next to impossible. On behalf of Metro Housing and those we serve, we encourage you to report the housing bond bill favorably.

Thank you.