

FY24 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

<i>Legislation</i>	<i>Sponsors/Committee</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>An Act promoting access to counsel and housing stability in Massachusetts (HD.3657 & SD.1082)</i>	Representatives Dave Rogers & Michael Day & Senator Sal DiDomenico	<p>This legislation will create an Access to Counsel Program that provides legal representation for tenants and owner-occupants with low incomes in eviction proceedings. Legal help and access to the right resources before a court eviction can prevent homelessness, stop illegal or unnecessary evictions, avoid displacement, and create a path to housing stability. The program would be phased in over five years and would help in raising awareness about tenant rights.</p> <p>*Budget # for year one of phase-in: \$7,000,000 **This is a repackaging of S 2671, H 1724 (Ensure right to counsel in eviction proceedings) from the previous legislative session (same sponsors). The term “right” has been replaced with “access.”</p>
<i>An Act promoting housing opportunity and mobility through eviction sealing (HOMES) (HD.3625 & SD.1592)</i>	Representative Mike Moran & Senator Lydia Edwards	<p>As soon as an eviction case is filed, a tenant has an eviction record regardless of the outcome. This can have long-term harmful effects on peoples’ ability to access stable and safe homes. This legislation would protect many tenants from being marked with an eviction record by providing a process for tenants to petition the court to seal certain records:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For tenants facing no-fault eviction after the conclusion of the case; • For tenants facing a non-payment eviction within 14 days of satisfying a judgment or agreement; and • For tenants facing fault eviction after 7 years without another fault eviction case.
<i>An Act codifying the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (HD.3349 & SD.682)</i>	Representative Adrian Madaro & Senator Joan Lovely	<p>Massachusetts led the country in creating the first rental assistance program, the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP). MRVP currently assists over 10,000 households with low- and moderate-incomes with the goal of one day achieving universal rental assistance. For such a large-scale program, MRVP exists only in the state budget and is subject to change each year. This legislation grounds the program in state statute and makes improvements that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepening affordability for renters through larger voucher payment shares; • Improving renter safety by requiring inspections; • Increasing the administrative fees so regional housing agencies and housing authorities can better cover the cost of the program; and • Improving data collection.

<i>An Act to establish an office of fair housing and fair housing trust fund (HD.889 & SD.1646)</i>	Representatives Chynah Tyler & Dave Rogers & Senator Lydia Edwards	Housing discrimination can occur in many forms leading to unequal treatment of minority home seekers and renters. This legislation would help in combating housing discrimination at all levels, including development, sales, lending, appraisals, marketing, tenant selection, applications, and zoning. An Office of Fair Housing and Fair Housing Trust Fund will help ensure Massachusetts has an institution and the resources needed to create, coordinate, and enforce equitable housing policy and practices across all communities and state agencies.
<i>An Act to end housing discrimination in the Commonwealth (SD.2034)</i>	Senator Adam Gomez	(This is a re-file of H.428/S.208 and H.358 from the previous session.) This bill lengthens the license suspension periods for brokers found to discriminate, empowers fair housing enforcement agencies to refer more cases to registration boards, and adds a fair housing and civil rights licensing expert to the Board of Real Estate Brokers.
<i>An Act creating the Massachusetts healthy homes program (HD.3864 & SD.728)</i>	Representatives Manny Cruz, Shirley B. Arriaga, & Senator John F. Keenan	People need safe and healthy environments in which to live. The presence of lead, poor indoor air quality, and other substandard housing conditions lead to developmental delays in children, respiratory disease, accidents and injuries, potential displacement, and spread of infectious disease, among other serious, preventable health consequences. The passage of this legislation will create the Massachusetts Healthy Homes Program (MHHP) Fund , to scale up the Commonwealth's efforts to address serious health problems caused by substandard housing. MHHP would improve housing quality and resident health by providing grants and low-cost deferred loans to income-eligible homeowners and landlords to make necessary improvements to their properties including but not limited to, lead paint abatement, indoor air quality improvements, and addressing structural inadequacies. The presence of lead, poor indoor air quality, and other substandard housing conditions pose serious, and in some cases irreversible, health hazards.
<i>An Act relative to housing service coordinators (HD.1933)</i>	Representative Kevin G. Honan	(Re-file of H. 1410). Legislation creates – but does not fund – a Housing Service Coordinators program to assist residents in subsidized housing to help mediate disputes between landlords and tenants and coordinate economic self-sufficiency services.
<i>An act to reduce the financial barriers to renting homes (SD.141)</i>	Senator Jamie Eldridge	(Re-file of S.884) Under current law, if the property owner uses a broker, the burden to pay the broker falls on the tenant. This bill will shift that burden to the property owner if a broker is used.

PENDING EVALUATION

<i>Legislation</i>	<i>Sponsors/Committee</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>An Act to create and implement a Massachusetts flexible supportive housing subsidy pool program (HD.216 & SD.674)</i>	Representative Joan Meschino & Senator Brendan Crighton	A flexible housing subsidy pool program re-envisioning the Commonwealth's approach to homelessness by shifting from crisis response to create stability across a continuum of services. This legislation would create a pool of public and private resources by bundling funding for capital, operating, and supportive services to help meet the complex housing and health needs of those experiencing homelessness and to enable funds to get out quickly and equitably.
<i>An Act granting a local option for a real estate transfer fee to fund affordable housing (HD.2857 & SD.1982)</i>	Representative Mike Connolly & Senator Jo Comerford	A lack of affordable homes and speculative home sales by higher income buyers have led to soaring housing costs and displacement in Massachusetts. This legislation would allow Massachusetts cities and towns to enact a small fee on high-value real estate sales, in order to create and support affordable housing. This legislation would generate millions of dollars for affordable housing by allowing communities to use this tool tailored to their needs.
<i>An Act providing upstream homelessness prevention assistance to families, youth, and adults (HD.1964 and SD.1169)</i>	Representative Marjorie Decker and Senator Brendan Crighton	This bill would put the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) homelessness prevention program into state statute and ensure that benefits are available to families and individuals earlier in a housing or utility crisis ("upstream"). The bill also seeks to streamline access, improve cross-agency collaboration, and allow households to access up to twelve months of assistance, without arbitrary dollar caps. In addition, the bill would require the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to publicly post reports on RAFT to provide increased transparency on how the program is operating and greater understanding of who the program is serving and not serving.
<i>An Act enabling cities and towns to stabilize rents and protect tenants (HD.3953 and SD.1818)</i>	Representative Dave Rogers, Representative Sam Montañó, and Senator Pat Jehlen	This bill would remove the statewide ban on rent control and establish a local option for cities and towns to regulate rents. If passed, cities and towns opting in would be able to limit annual rent increases and limit no fault evictions for certain dwelling units. The bill would limit annual rent increases for covered dwelling units to the change in the Consumer Price Index or 5%, whichever is lower.
<i>An Act providing for climate change adaptation infrastructure and affordable housing investments in the commonwealth, SD.1226/HD.2890</i>	Representative Sam Montañó, Senator Jamie Eldridge	This legislation explores options such as increasing the Deeds Excise Tax and enabling local real estate transfer fees to establish a dedicated funding stream for affordable housing and climate infrastructure.

<i>An Act Relative to Housing Production (HD.1448/SD.871)</i>	Representatives Jeffrey Rosario Turco, Rob Consalvo, Senator Brendan P. Crighton	<p>A comprehensive reform bill packed with the tools Massachusetts needs to increase the production of all types of housing in all corners of the Commonwealth, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a statewide housing production goal including a minimum number of affordable homes, • Requiring multifamily zoning in transportation rich cities/towns and other suitable locations throughout the Commonwealth, • Making the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) by-right in every city and town, • Allowing cities/towns to set minimum affordability requirements for new housing development by simple majority vote.
<i>An Act to guarantee a tenant's first right of refusal (HD.3645/SD.2238)</i>	Representatives Jay D. Livingstone, Rob Consalvo, & Senator Pat Jehlen	<p>The TOPA Enabling Act would allow cities and towns the local option of providing tenants in multi-family buildings the right to match a third-party offer when their homes are being sold. Tenants can designate their rights to a non-profit or local housing authority, or partner with an affordable housing purchaser.</p> <p>TOPA is revenue neutral, does not regulate sales prices, and explicitly exempts small owners.</p>
<i>An Act for a right of first refusal for foreclosed property (SD.1720/HD.3914)</i>	Senator Lydia Edwards and Representative Chris Worrell	<p>This bill provides additional requirements for owners and mortgagees of tenant-occupied properties to fulfill before selling or foreclosing the property. This bill provides the opportunity for tenants of foreclosed property to purchase the property or assign their right.</p>
<i>An Act providing upstream homelessness prevention assistance to families, youth, and adults (SD.856/HD.1312)</i>	Senator Brendan Crighton and Representative Marjorie C. Decker	<p>This bill would:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Put RAFT into state statute and ensure that benefits are available to families and individuals earlier in a housing or utility crisis ("upstream"); 2. Streamline access, improve cross-agency collaboration, allow households to access up to 12 months of assistance without arbitrary dollar caps; and, 3. Require the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to publicly post reports on RAFT to provide increased transparency on how the program is operating, and who it is (or is not) serving