



July 27, 2021

State Senator Adam Hinds, Chair
Joint Committee on Revenue
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Room 109-E
Boston, MA 02133

State Representative Mark Cusack, Chair
Joint Committee on Revenue
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Room 34
Boston, MA 02133

Re: H.2895 - An Act empowering cities and towns to impose a fee on home sales over one million dollars to support affordable housing

Dear Chair Hinds, Chair Cusack, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Committee on Revenue,

I am honored to have the opportunity to present this testimony **in support of House Bill 2895**, “An Act empowering cities and towns to impose a fee on home sales over one million dollars to support affordable housing,” on behalf of **The Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB)**.

GBFB is the largest hunger relief organization in New England and among the largest food banks in the country. GBFB distributes more than 83 million healthy meals annually through a network of nearly 600 partner agencies in 190 cities and towns across Eastern Massachusetts. Monthly, we are serving approximately 600,000 individuals, including vulnerable populations of seniors, veterans, college students, children, and families.

Food and housing insecurity are intrinsically linked, as more affordable housing for the clients that we serve would lead to less reliance on the emergency food system. The median price of a Massachusetts home hit \$508,000 in April 2021, 21.1% higher than the previous year. That price is expected to rise again another 10.7% over the next year. A lack of affordable housing coupled with the economic downturn of the past 15 months has put our most vulnerable communities in an impossible position, making legislation like H.2895 more important than ever.

Our nearly 600 partners serving communities across Eastern Massachusetts would benefit from more affordable housing. The Island Food Pantry, one of our agency partners that serves Martha’s Vineyard, has experienced a month-over-month increase of 50% in attendance compared to 2019. Through the pandemic, they have served individuals whose living conditions consist of tarps as roofs. They have even had staff, those who are on the front lines of ensuring

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that our communities have enough to eat, couch surf just to keep a roof over their head. H.2895 is not just legislation for the affordable housing community – it's legislation that serves the vast network of service providers across the Commonwealth working to provide basic needs security for our neighbors in need.

We urge the committee to favorably report out this important piece of legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Catherine D'Amato".

Catherine D'Amato
President and CEO
The Greater Boston Food Bank