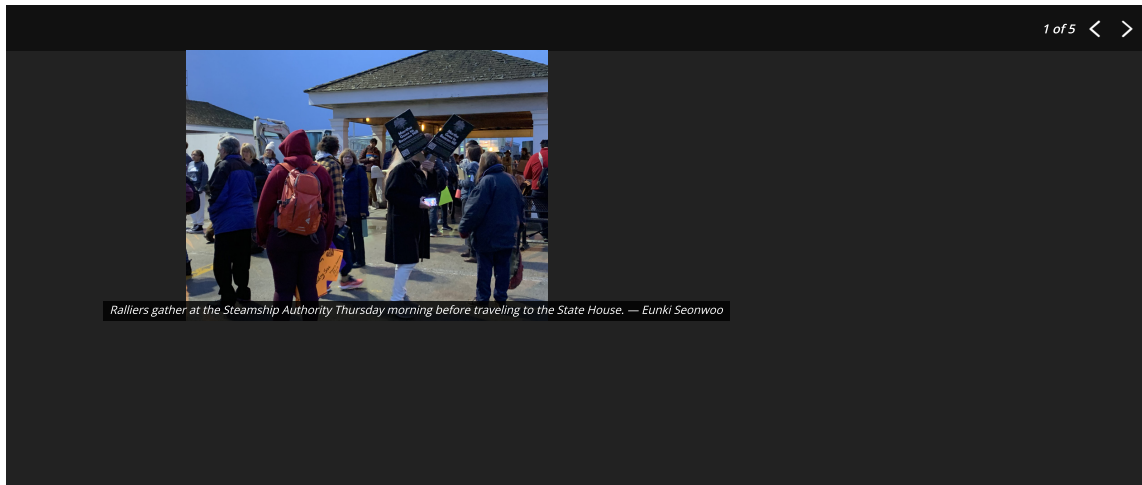


"Martha goes to Beacon Hill"

"I feel like the Vineyard is this wonderful community and today is just about illustrating that and showing our legislators what's at stake."

By **Eunki Seonwoo** · March 23, 2023



Ralliers gather at the Steamship Authority Thursday morning before traveling to the State House. — Eunki Seonwoo

About 200 Vineyarders got the 7 am ferry Thursday morning to a fleet of charter buses waiting in Woods Hole, the beginnings of a trip to Boston in support of housing legislation at the state house.

Ralliers were gung-ho for a full day of advocating in front of lawmakers.

The "Martha Goes to Beacon Hill" rally has been months in the making and organized by the Coalition to Create a Martha's Vineyard Housing Bank.

The group hopes that state lawmakers will allow the Vineyard to impose a transfer fee on expensive real estate, in order to develop housing.

According to coalition steering committee member Abbie Zell, 250 people from Martha's Vineyard and 60 from Nantucket signed up, although not everyone is going to Beacon Hill on the same route.

A Steamship Authority booth worker said the biggest group on the ferry was 175 people.

Everyone had their own reasons to head to advocate for housing on the Island.

Georgia Maroni, who lived on the Island for 12 years, said she is traveling to Boston for her friends.

"I have a lot of friends who tend to be housing insecure," she said. "I'm pretty lucky because I have a boyfriend who is an Islander so we have pretty secure housing, but it's hard when your friends are choosing to leave or stay because they can't find a place to live."

Jim Wallen, who works in real estate and is an Aquinnah planning board member, pointed out the lack of housing for working folks. He said the Island was becoming a place where a person needed to be wealthy to secure housing.

"People in the trades, they just don't have a place to live," he said. "It's not just trades now, it's professionals. There's just no year-round housing anymore."

Zell said in particular, the young people with skills will become Martha's Vineyard's "greatest export."

Steering committee member Kim Angell, who worked in affordable housing for 20 years, said the Island is at a "crisis point," and now is the time to act.

Ralliers were thrilled to see such a large group, that included students, traveling to Boston.

"It's just magic," Zell said. "I feel like the Vineyard is this wonderful community and today is just about illustrating that and showing our legislators what's at stake."

The Martha's Vineyard Times will be filing reports from the rally.