October 20, 2021

Dear Honorable Members of the Massachusetts House and Senate:

I write to you today, on behalf of, and with the full support, of the Aquinnah Board of Selectmen, to ask for your support of Senate Bill 868, House Bill 1377 and House Bill 2895. The housing shortage on Martha's Vineyard has worsened as more families moved here, with the pandemic being a major contributing factor. The recent population influx has driven the average home price well above one million dollars, inadvertently but definitively blocking middle class islanders from home ownership. Those in our community who suffer from substance use disorder or mental health issues are more than ever at severe risk for being un-homed. These bills seek to implement local measures to address the severity of Martha's Vineyard's housing crisis that is a negative impact on our economy and infrastructure, and provide a remedy to the need for a significant, reliable long-term funding for housing solutions.

My Board supports these bills introduced in the MA Legislature which seek to establish Transfer Fees on real estate transactions over a certain amount to fund affordable, community, and attainable housing. My Board further supports amendments to these bills to allow deed restriction up to 240% of Area Median Income, to address critical year- round workforce housing needs, as our median home price on the Island has climbed past $1.2 million.

The Board also endorses the Coalition to Create the Martha's Vineyard Housing Bank (CCMVHB) which seeks to create an Island-wide housing bank, funded by a transfer fee on real estate transactions, for the purpose of directly funding affordable community, and attainable year-round housing. We believe this enabling legislation is a critical part of our local strategy for overcoming the aforementioned challenges.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey L. Madison, Esq.
Aquinnah Town Administrator