



October 28, 2021

State Senator John Keenan, Chair
Joint Committee on Housing
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Room 413-F
Boston, MA 02133

State Representative James Arciero, Chair
Joint Committee on Housing
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Room 38
Boston, MA 02133

Re: H.1377/S.868 - An Act empowering cities and towns to impose a fee on certain real estate transactions to support affordable housing

Dear Chair Keenan, Chair Arciero, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Committee on Housing,

I am honored to have the opportunity to present this testimony **in support of House Bill 1377 and Senate Bill 868**, “An Act empowering cities and towns to impose a fee on certain real estate transactions 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 96 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 stable housing for the clients that we serve leads to less reliance on the emergency food system and reduces the challenges of having to choose to pay a rent or mortgage versus purchasing food. Our nearly 600 partners serve communities across Eastern Massachusetts that have been impacted by food and housing insecurity. 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 that our communities have enough to eat, couch surf just to keep a roof over their head.

Cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth are facing a housing affordability crisis and desperately need funds to develop affordable housing to prevent the displacement of their

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residents. **H.1377/S.868** will empower communities that choose to do so to place a small fee of 0.5% to 2% on higher-end real estate transactions to fund affordable housing. This legislation is intentionally adaptable so that different municipalities can enact the type of transfer fee that works best for their community. Even with more accommodating zoning regulations and the forthcoming American Rescue Plan Act funds expected to be allocated for housing, additional and reliable funding sources are desperately needed, and transfer fee revenue will permit the subsidies required to construct truly affordable housing.

We urge the committee to favorably report out this important piece of legislation as we work to ensure that the residents of our Commonwealth have their basic needs – such as food and housing – met. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine Lynn
Sr. Director, Communications and Public Affairs
The Greater Boston Food Bank