

March 14, 2022

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

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

Dear Chair Keenan and Chair Arciero,

I write to you today in support of **S868/H1377: An Act empowering cities and towns to impose a fee on certain real estate transactions to support affordable housing**. This bill would allow municipalities to adopt a small fee on certain real estate transactions to directly fund affordable housing efforts in their own communities. The fee would be an essential tool in addressing Massachusetts' housing crisis.

Island Health Care is a Federally Qualified Health Center on Martha's Vineyard. Our mission is to ensure all islanders, regardless of income or insurance status, have access to high-quality primary care in their community. The importance of addressing social determinants of health such as housing equity and homelessness and their impact on health care outcomes has been recognized and made a priority for community health centers. We have seen firsthand how a lack of affordable, stable housing can affect our patients' health. We recognize the need for solutions like this real estate transfer fee in order to fund local housing efforts.

Beyond community health concerns, a lack of housing on the island has been a significant hurdle in maintaining a workforce. Our year-round staff has found it increasingly difficult to secure affordable options on the Vineyard and, because of this, we have struggled to recruit new staff, especially clinical providers. Given the Island's shortage of primary care providers (we are a HRSA-designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) and Medically Underserved Population (MUP)), this directly affects Island Health Care's ability to meet the needs of our patients and community. In order to continue providing the island with equitable, accessible, and high-quality care, we need to ensure our staff will be able to live in our community.

A 2021 [report](#) by the Boston Foundation demonstrated the importance of collaboration between community health and housing organizations in improving health outcomes. Island Health Care 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. The bank would provide direct funding for affordable, attainable year-round housing, which the island greatly needs. I strongly encourage you to advance this transfer fee in order to support CCMVHB's efforts and contribute to a healthier island.

Our island community, like so many others in Massachusetts, is in the midst of a housing crisis. We cannot afford to wait for more solutions. I respectfully urge you to favorably report out S868/H1377 to ensure local housing efforts are funded. The health of our community depends on it.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Mitchell
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