



## Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence Testimony in Support of H.1377/S.868

December 9, 2021

To the Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Housing,

My name is Madeline Ranalli. I'm a resident of Newton and I serve as the Legislative Action Committee Chair for the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence, a group of over 120 community organizations dedicated to ending gun violence across the state, ranging from public health professionals and religious groups to domestic violence specialists and community violence programs. On behalf of the Coalition, I wish to testify in support of **H.1377/S.868**, "An Act empowering cities and towns to support affordable housing with a fee on certain real estate transactions," sponsored by Representative Connolly and Senator Comerford.

The Coalition supports the Transfer Fee For Affordable Housing Coalition in their advocacy for this bill, which we believe is an important tool to empower municipalities to fund and build more affordable housing for their residents. In our work, we prioritize taking a *holistic approach* to ending gun violence in the Commonwealth, working to propose solutions that tackle the root causes of violence, because we know that people have to be failed in so many ways by their community and by their government before a gun even ends up in their hands.

One area of this failure is housing insecurity, which our state struggles immensely with. Research shows that access to stable housing can reduce both gun deaths as well as children's exposure to violence growing up, by decreasing rates of behavioral and learning problems, developmental delays, and mental illness.<sup>1</sup> Modeling from Massachusetts also shows a correlation between residential segregation and rates of firearm homicide.<sup>2</sup> Lower-income communities of color who have borne the brunt of histories of redlining and housing discrimination are more likely to face higher rates of gun violence and gun deaths. This bill is an opportunity to right this wrong,

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<sup>1</sup> Bashir S. A. (2002). Home is where the harm is: inadequate housing as a public health crisis. *American journal of public health*, 92(5), 733–738. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.92.5.733>

<sup>2</sup>Michael Poulson, Miriam Y Neufeld, Tracey Dechert, Lisa Allee, Kelly M. Kenzik, Historic redlining, structural racism, and firearm violence: A structural equation modeling approach, *The Lancet Regional Health - Americas*, Volume 3,2021,100052, ISSN 2667-193X, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lana.2021.100052>.

allowing communities, many of whom have benefitted from these legacies of exclusion, to make the financial commitments to values of social justice and equity.

Finally, the Coalition knows that *harm is cyclical*, and that cycles of poverty and violence continue to perpetuate if they are not disrupted with opportunity. Public health research shows that community investment in institutions like housing and education is the key to helping families break these cycles of harm and making communities safer.<sup>3</sup> On behalf of the Coalition, I request that the Committee report this bill out favorably. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Madeline Ranalli

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<sup>3</sup> Parsons, C., Ross, T., Vallas, R., (2017, May 23). *Creating safe and healthy living environments for low-income families*. Center for American Progress.  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/creating-safe-and-healthy-living-environments-for-low-income-families/>.