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TOWN OF CHILMARK CHILMARK, MASSACHUSETTS

TOWN OFFICES:
Beetlebung Corner
Post Office Box 119
Chilmark, MA 02535
508-645-2100
508-645-2110 Fax

October 4, 2023

Representative Mark Cusack
Chair, Committee on Revenue
Room 34, State House
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Susan Moran
Chair, Committee on Revenue
Room 506, State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Cusack and Chair Moran:

We are writing in support of bills in your committee:

- H. 2747 offered by Rep. Mike Connolly, “An Act granting a local option for a real estate transfer fee to fund affordable housing”
- H. 2788 offered by Rep. Dylan Fernandes, “An Act empowering cities and towns to impose a mansion fee to support affordable housing”
- S. 1771 offered by Sen. Joanne Comerford, “An Act granting a local option for a real estate transfer fee to fund affordable housing”

We urge your quick support for these bills and ask you to send them to the floor for consideration.

Over the last decade, the housing crisis in Massachusetts has exploded, with significant ramifications for communities across the Commonwealth.

In locations that are geographically isolated, such as Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket, the situation is extreme, compromising our community’s viability and our ability to maintain municipal infrastructure. With a median home price of over 1.5 million, and essentially no year-round rental inventory at any level, we cannot staff necessary positions across the Island. Our public safety departments, public schools, and hospital have significant problems attracting and retaining necessary staff due to lack of year-round housing at all income levels. Dukes County Sheriff Ogden has repeatedly emphasized to the state the challenges his department faces in recruitment and retention of employees.

These bills propose to address this situation through a local-option transfer fee on high-end real estate transactions, creating a new revenue stream directed to create and preserve affordable housing locally.

In late fall 2022, Island voters overwhelmingly approved a joint legislative filing from the six Martha’s Vineyard towns to establish an Island-wide Housing Bank to be funded by a transfer fee. **We ask you to please advance the local option transfer fee in the Commonwealth to enable us to realize the MV Housing Bank, a critical tool for preserving our year-round community.**

Even with affordable housing projects underway in all six island towns, the current revenue at hand is insufficient to meet the scope of the need.

The flexibility of the transfer fee revenue will allow us to create new tools to protect year-round inventory through deed restrictions to preserve our rapidly diminishing inventory, assist year-round homebuyers trying to maintain a foothold on the Island, and fund local affordable housing rental development and conversions.

We ask for your support for these bills.

Sincerely,

Timothy R. Carroll

Town Administrator
Town of Chilmark

