



October 26, 2021

Honorable Members of the Massachusetts Legislature:

We Stand Together / Estamos Todos Juntos (WST/ETJ) is a nonpartisan grassroots civic engagement group on Martha's Vineyard whose supporters come from all six island towns. We ask the Joint Committee on Housing to report H.1377/S.868 out of committee favorably. Please accept this letter as written testimony for the October 26 hearing on H.1377/S.868. We also ask the Joint Committee on Revenue to report H.2895 out of committee favorably. In addition, we support amendments to these bills to allow deed restriction up to 240% of Area Median Income and to address critical year-round workforce housing needs.

WST/ETJ's committees focus on Racial Justice and Human Dignity, Education, the Environment, and Women's Issues. Every single one of these committees is affected by the island's ever-worsening shortage of housing within the means of working residents and families. Teachers and health-care workers, among many others, can't find affordable year-round rental housing, much less homes they can hope to buy. The shops and restaurants that sustain our tourist economy are short-staffed because seasonal workforce housing is almost impossible to find. Just as important, the Vineyard's civic and cultural life depends on volunteers, but workers who must commute from off-island take their free time with them when they go home at the end of the day, and many of those live here devote so much time and energy to keeping a roof over their heads that there's not much left over for volunteering.

WST/ETJ members and supporters actively support current efforts to create a Vineyard housing bank modeled on the very successful Martha's Vineyard Land Bank. (For more information, see the website of the [Coalition to Create the MV Housing Bank](#) [CCMVHB]) If as we hope these efforts succeed, a reliable revenue stream will be required to make a serious dent in the need for both rental and for-purchase housing. A transfer fee is ideally suited to provide some of that revenue, and S.868, H.1377, and H.2895 will make that possible.

Thank you for your favorable consideration of these essential bills.

For We Stand Together / Estamos Todos Juntos:

Joy Robinson-Lynch, Jill De La Hunt, Michelle Jasny, Nicola Blake, Susanna J. Sturgis, and  
Toni Kauffman  
Coordinating Committee

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