National Association of
Housing & Redevelopment Officials

Governor Files Historic Housing Bond Bill

Governor Maura Healey's historic "Affordable Homes Act" represents an aggressive, comprehensive, and courageous approach to resolving Massachusetts' housing affordability crisis. For those serving at and served by our state's local housing authorities, it represents a significant and important renewal of the Commonwealth's commitment to ensure that those experiencing extreme poverty have a safe and welcoming place to call home. The Governor's doubling down on that commitment signals her carefully considered, bold, and visionary leadership with a clear focus on building a vibrant future for all – one that includes state-funded public housing.

For more than three generations, Massachusetts' local housing authorities have been part of the tightly woven fabric that forms our Commonwealth's social safety net, a part that provides homes to more than 70,000 residents – seniors, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and families in transition – earning less than 30% of area median income. Housing authorities do this with an efficiency and effectiveness that has allowed for decades of underinvestment. Governor Healey's proposal represents a sea change in its recognition that state-funded public housing is a vital component to any successful strategy to resolve the present crisis and that housing authorities are a critical partner in achieving that success. And those decades of underinvestment are coming to an end.

In the "Affordable Homes Act," the Administration proposes $4.12 billion in capital authorization under the state's bonding capacity. Of that total, $1.6 billion – nearly 39% – is committed to support local housing authorities. The last five-year bond bill included only $600 million and not all of it reached housing authorities. Governor Healey's expansive vision for affordable housing, as shown by the thorough and thoughtful measures proposed in her bill, signals a complete understanding of the need to reconsider the underutilized potential of local housing authorities to care for and house with dignity a segment of our citizenry that cannot be overlooked.

In addition to this historic level of support, the Governor is proposing a series of non-monetary policy initiatives and technical changes that will significantly improve local housing authority operations and help level the playing field for the development of new deeply affordable residences. In August, Ed Augustus, Secretary of Housing & Livable Communities, and his staff asked local housing authority Executive Directors to provide a list of priority non-monetary items to include in the bill as it was being drafted, specifying the Administration's desire to streamline processes and remove barriers that impede housing authorities from being more active in the production of more affordable housing. Local housing authorities are actively redeveloping existing affordable housing and producing new affordable housing every year but do so at a disadvantage given a variety of constraints ripe for updating. The Secretary's foresight and unprecedented invitation was welcomed by our members as another sign of the Administration's leadership through a clear desire to reset the relationship with local housing authorities as active partners in solving the current crisis and building a more stable housing future for the

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Commonwealth.

To demonstrate our immense gratitude for the Administration’s tremendous support and collaborative approach, we look forward to strongly supporting the “Affordable Homes Act” as it makes its way through the legislative process.