

Boston Mayor Walsh announces housing security and economic mobility legislative package

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Mayor Walsh

BOSTON – Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh announced his housing security and economic mobility legislative package, the first of four legislative packages the City of Boston will be submitting to the Massachusetts Legislature.

The 14-bill housing security and economic mobility package promotes equity, opportunity, and resilience through preserving neighborhoods, stabilizing vulnerable households, supporting small businesses, removing barriers that keep people in poverty, providing new pathways to good jobs,

and continuing to leverage Boston's prosperity to build a more inclusive and equitable city.

"Boston and the Commonwealth succeed when everyone has a chance to move forward," said Mayor Walsh. "Housing and economic mobility are linked: a stable home allows residents to pursue opportunities. In Boston, we've increased our affordable housing goals and worked to ensure everyone has a home in our city. We are doubling down on economic mobility by supporting small businesses, many of them owned by women, immigrants and people of color, reforming parts of the system that create barriers that keep people in poverty, and providing new pathways to good jobs. I look forward to advancing these bills in the Legislature, and creating more opportunity for all."

Housing Security

Mayor Walsh's first legislative package of the year focuses on housing security and economic mobility, expanding the work that Boston has done to address the region's affordable housing crisis and proposing new and existing tools to leverage Boston's prosperity and create sustainable wealth opportunities for a more inclusive and equitable city. The housing security bills proposed seek to help existing tenants, particularly older adults, remain in their homes, and create additional funding for affordable housing.

This work builds off Boston's commitment to ensuring all communities have affordable and equitable housing options. Currently, one in five housing units in Boston is income restricted to people with none to moderate incomes. Boston has secured funding to build affordable housing by utilizing a range of tools, including leveraging market-rate development, collecting linkage and Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP) payments from real estate developers, and by supporting passage of the Community Preservation Act (CPA).

In 2018, Mayor Walsh increased the City's overall housing targets from 53,000 to 69,000 new units by 2030, including 15,820 income-restricted units, to meet Boston's population growth. These income-restricted units will include purchasing 1,000 rental housing units from the speculative

market and income-restricting them through an expanded Acquisition Opportunity Program. In addition, the City announced awardees of an affordable housing funding round that included more than \$16 million in city affordable housing funds, and the first awards of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding for affordable housing development projects.

As the City continues to make strides towards creating more affordable housing, it is also working with regional partners to ensure affordable housing is a reality throughout the region through the Metro Mayor's Regional Housing Task Force. Mayor Walsh helped spearhead the execution of a recently-released regional housing production goal, which aims to create 185,000 new units of housing across the region by the year 2030. The proposed bills will enhance the work of the Metro Mayors Coalition.

"We're very pleased with the interlocking package of Housing Security bills that Mayor Walsh is submitting to the legislature," said Joe Kreisberg, President and CEO of the MA Association of Community Development Corporations. "Strengthening tools like the Inclusionary Development Program and Linkage to ensure that Boston will be able to build income-restricted housing in the future represents great forward-thinking. We'd like to see more cities and towns utilize these tools to build more affordable housing in their communities, and to adopt the needed tenant protections the package offers to the Commonwealth's most vulnerable households."

The housing security bills in the Mayor's legislative package include:

An Act to Further Leverage Commercial Development to Build Housing and Create Jobs: would allow the City of Boston to adjust the Linkage Program, which was created as a way for commercial development to contribute to Boston's needs for affordable housing and workforce development. Current legislation mandates that a fee per square foot would be directed to the Neighborhood Housing Trust Fund and The Neighborhood Jobs Trust, with the City being allowed to take a Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment every three years. However, given the cyclical nature of building booms, greater flexibility has proven necessary to share the benefits of current economic growth with more residents. In order to provide Boston with the

ability to make responsible adjustments to the Linkage formula as needed, the bill would eliminate the restriction on making adjustments only once every three years. The home rule petition will be filed today.

An Act to Preserve Inclusionary Development: would memorialize Boston's Inclusionary Development Program (IDP) into the Zoning Code. Currently, IDP applies to any proposed residential project of 10 or more units that is either financed by or built on property owned by the City of Boston or the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA), or that requires zoning relief. To fulfill IDP requirements, developers may create income-restricted affordable units within their developments on-site, create income-restricted affordable housing in an off-site location, make a cash contribution towards the creation or preservation of income-restricted affordable housing, or a combination of these options. This Act would require IDP obligations from all projects of 10 or more units, regardless of the need for zoning relief, supporting Boston's present and future needs for income-restricted housing. The home rule petition will be filed today.

To be filed by the Community Preservation Coalition, an Act to Sustain Community Preservation Act Revenue would protect the Community Preservation Act (CPA) revenue that more than 170 cities and towns depend on for the creation of affordable housing, open space, and historic preservation. It would increase the fees for recording deeds to return the state match to closer to 50 percent. In 2018, after Boston joined the coalition of cities and towns that receive CPA funds, the match was just 19 percent.

An Act to Ensure Right to Counsel in Eviction Proceedings: would provide certain low-income tenants facing eviction with a court-appointed attorney for representation, increasing housing and economic stability for vulnerable households. The bill also creates a public task force to create an implementation plan.

An Act to Protect Elderly Tenants: would prohibit no-fault eviction of persons over 75 years of age. Landlords would be required to provide notice to the local community at the same time the eviction notice is served to the elderly tenant. Eviction would only be permitted for good cause such as failure to pay rent, damage to the property, or use of the

premises for illegal activities. Rent increases would be limited to five percent per year for tenants aged 75 or older to prevent landlords from using large rent increases to get around just cause protections. This would apply to all properties with six or more rental units.

An Act to Guarantee a Tenant's Right to Purchase: this local option bill would provide tenant associations of residential rental properties with more than five rental units with the right of first refusal to collectively purchase the properties at fair market value. The Act would allow the tenants match any bona fide offer to sell the property or to assign their right to purchase to a non-profit acting on their behalf.

Economic Mobility

As Boston continues to grow at an incredible rate, Mayor Walsh has prioritized economic equity to ensure all Bostonians benefit from Boston's booming economy. In 2014, Mayor Walsh created the Economic Development Cabinet to make Boston an appealing and accessible place for families and businesses to grow and thrive in a way that fosters inclusion, broadens opportunity, and shares prosperity, thereby enhancing the quality of life for all Bostonians.

Milestones include the development of the city's first ever Economic Inclusion and Equity Agenda, publication of the city's first Small Business Report, launch of the Small Business Resource Center, and passage of an updated Boston Residents Job Policy with elevated develop standard for hiring and building in Boston.

The economic mobility bills in the Mayor's legislative package include:

An Act to Increase Access to Affordable Community College: would replicate Boston's Tuition-Free Community College (TFCC) Initiative launched in June 2016, making it available statewide. TFCC was launched by Mayor Walsh and currently serves 295 students attending Bunker Hill Community College, Roxbury Community College and MassBay Community College. Students enrolled through the program have an average graduation rate of 70 percent over three years, significantly higher than national averages.

Katherine Hernandez, Dorchester resident and a sociology major at Bunker Hill Community College, credits the city's Tuition-Free Community College program with helping her succeed in getting her degree. "I wouldn't be able to go to college if it wasn't for this program," said Hernandez.

An Act to Create Economic Vitality in Boston Neighborhoods: would expand the number of liquor licenses in Boston and target them to neighborhoods that would greatly benefit with an influx of restaurants to drive economic activity. Restaurants are the lifeblood of neighborhood business districts, providing jobs and gathering spaces, and spurring other businesses to locate nearby, and this balanced approach to licensing ensures neighborhoods historically disadvantaged by the liquor license process will receive their fair share.

An Act to Ensure Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces: would require state contracting officers to consider an employer's record of workplace law compliance, including health and safety standards, wage laws and civil rights laws, before awarding a contract. The goal is to protect workers from wage abuse, workplace discrimination, and unsafe working conditions while ensuring a fair public contracting system that makes sure companies are following the law.

An Opportunity to Achieve Equal Pay: Massachusetts Pay Transparency and Pipeline Advancement Act: would require all companies with more than 100 employees to report the gender and race of employees holding specific management titles, and require the Office of Labor and Workforce Development to post data. This legislation would also establish a fund to provide professional development services to employees who observe a disparity between the overall and their employer's ratio, in order to help improve their employer's rating.

An Act to Promote Asset Building for Low-Income Residents: would remove the cap on assets for families receiving temporary cash assistance. The current policy disincentivizes families to accumulate even moderate savings and makes it more difficult for them to access resources. Eight other states have enacted similar changes with positive results.

An Act to Lift the Cap on Kids: would repeal a policy that denies critical resources to children conceived while, or soon after, a family is receiving benefits. Massachusetts is one of only 17 states that have a Cap on Kids or similar policy.

An Act to Help Working Families: which seeks to raise the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to 50 percent, would return money directly to more than 400,000 eligible low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The EITC is almost universally seen as one of the most effective anti-poverty programs, and an increase of the state EITC would offer a significant economic boost for low-income workers.

Finally, Boston understands the importance of supporting industries that drive growth, create jobs and generate tax revenue for the Commonwealth. Tourism, bolstered by arts and culture, is one of the state's largest industries. Investment in Tourism, Arts and Culture, used to promote the state, support institutions and build a more resilient workforce in the hospitality and creative industries would yield impressive dividends. To that end An Act to Create a Statewide Commission on Tourism and Arts and Culture Investment would explore ways to raise money for sustained investment in this sector.

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