



## **PDM's Housing Advocacy Toolkit**

The need for housing in Massachusetts has gone beyond a crisis to a true housing emergency for households at all income levels except the most affluent.

The economic impact for everyone is severe, and countless people are suffering: overflowing family shelters, children attending multiple schools in one school year as their families couch-surf to find a place to sleep, many residents who choose between buying medication or food and paying rent or mortgages, seniors who cannot find suitable alternatives to their outdated housing and young people who cannot afford to live in their hometowns or stay in the Commonwealth.

The seriousness of this emergency is finally receiving widespread attention. Governor Healey has created a Cabinet level position for Housing and proposed a broad Housing Bond Bill with both financial and policy components.

This situation has multiple causes and multiple critical dimensions, but, at its heart, is the need to dramatically expand the Commonwealth's supply of housing. For an overview of its dimensions, you may find PDM's series of recorded forums on these issues helpful, particularly the initial and final overview forums, linked [here](#).

In the face of a predicament this huge and this complex, it's often hard to know how individual citizens can make a meaningful difference. PDM's housing working group has [devised a platform](#) of critical policy issues for citizens to support.

The **TOOLKIT** below is our effort to suggest some urgent and specific ways for you to get involved now. The only way this emergency can truly be resolved is by producing more housing. We must build denser housing, including multi-family, cluster housing, and smaller single-family units on smaller lots. Every community in the Commonwealth must do its part! At the same time, there are some urgent short-term policy needs to protect people during the time it will take to repair and increase our housing supply.

## *Toolkit for Action — Steps We Can Each Take Now*

1. The essence of housing creation is local. Local resistance to “changing the character of our town”, also known as “NIMBY-ism”, has been a central cause of the shortage, so we must make our voices heard in our communities, where our organizing efforts often have greater impact than at the state level:

A. Start by finding out if your City or Town has a state-approved Housing Production Plan (HPP) that identifies your community’s housing needs and how to meet them. If you do have an HPP, review a copy of the Plan to see what has been proposed and what is actually being done (it should be on your community’s website or available through your Planning Department). If there is not an HPP, ask your community to create one by reaching out to your Select Board or elected municipal representatives. If you are a Community Preservation Community, those funds can be used to pay for producing the HPP.

B. Talk with your local elected officials, and members of your Planning Boards, and Zoning Board of Appeals about how to create more housing in your community. Tell them that this is an urgent priority for you – that you are a YIMBY (“Yes in my backyard!”) and you can organize other voters.

C. Show up for local government meetings about housing supply– and especially the approval process for specific projects, often attended primarily by project opponents. Sign up to speak first, to set a welcoming tone.

D. Talk with others in your community to help them recognize that it is in their interest to increase the housing supply and make it more affordable, so young people who grew up there can stay and seniors who want to downsize will be able to find a place to live that they can afford.

E. If you can identify even a small group of people who are willing to work with you and become activists, please reach out to PDM’s housing working group at [info@progressivedemsofmass.org](mailto:info@progressivedemsofmass.org). We can help you strategize about next steps and identify useful resources and allies.

2. The Commonwealth also has a huge, powerful role to play: clearing away regulatory obstacles, providing needed financial support for affordable and attainable housing, and protecting people’s housing while we restore an adequate housing supply.

A. Crucial bills are being considered currently; so contact your local legislators NOW, and tell them that you support increasing the housing supply in Massachusetts and expanding protections for those whose housing security is threatened.

B. At present, the primary legislative vehicle to address the housing emergency is the Governor’s Housing Bond Bill, known as [H.4183 Affordable Homes Act](#). The bill is full of urgently needed elements, including billions of dollars of bonding authorization for upgrading and expanding our housing stock and an array of crucial policy changes. After hearings before two joint committees, the bill is now in the House Ways & Means Committee, which is expected to report out a version of it for House action quite soon. After

that, the bill will move to the Senate and likely then to a conference committee. It is critical that the legislature complete action on a robust bill before its July 31 adjournment.

It is urgent that you reach out NOW to your state representative, and ask them to urge House leadership to move this bill forward quickly and favorably. Aside from supporting the bonding authorizations proposed by the Governor, please specifically urge support for inclusion of the local-option land transfer fee authorization. House Speaker Mariano recently announced that he is skeptical about including this measure in the bill, because the transfer fee was not as “popular” with his members as he had expected, and because it didn’t seem like an important measure in addressing the housing crisis, despite the fact that a broad range of communities, from Boston and Somerville and Arlington to Provincetown and Martha’s Vineyard, have already voted to seek local authority for a transfer fee, and despite analysis [from the Governor’s office](#) and [Mass Budget and Policy Center](#) demonstrating the significant resources the fee could provide to a wide range of communities. We need our legislators to demand inclusion of this measure in the bill.

C. Beyond the Bond Bill, there are a number of other important legislative priorities to raise with your legislators. (For an even longer list, see [the PDM housing working group’s priority list](#).)

- In the [annual budget H.2](#), full support of the Governor’s proposal to expand funding for the state’s housing voucher program.
- Authorization of local-option rent stabilization ordinances.
- Tenant protections, including right to counsel in eviction proceedings, the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (“TOPA”), and sealing of eviction records.