



July 11, 2024

Honorable James Arciero, House Chair  
Joint Committee on Housing  
State House, Room 146  
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Honorable William Brownsberger  
Senate President Pro Tempore  
State House, Room 319  
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Senate President Pro Tempore Brownsberger, Chair Arciero and Members of the Conference Committee:

On behalf of our member organizations, we are writing in support of a variety of initiatives included in the respective versions of the Housing Bond Bill that recognize the integral connection between water infrastructure and the growth of housing in the Commonwealth. Without access to water infrastructure that provides drinking water or removes wastewater, there is little chance of building affordable housing, much less one affordable house.

With that in mind, we respectfully request your support for the following initiatives within the respective housing bond bills that recognize the relationship between water infrastructure and housing inventory:

- **Funding the Expansion of the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). (HB4726; Line-Item: 1599-3032).** Massachusetts faces a housing crisis, but many communities lack the water infrastructure to support new development. The MWRA, with its exceptional water quality has the capacity to serve millions of additional residents while remaining well below its safe yield and factoring in future climate impacts. The House version of the Housing Bond Bill proposes a critical \$1 billion investment to help communities connect to the MWRA system. This funding would remove the financial burden for residents, making MWRA membership a realistic option. By joining the MWRA, municipalities would gain access to a reliable, high-quality water source, enabling them to: address existing water quality and quantity challenges; support economic growth and housing development; reduce pressure on local water sources, promoting environmental sustainability. In short, this investment is a win for municipalities (i.e. access to clean water to support growth), existing MWRA members (i.e. potentially lower water assessments) and the environment (i.e. elimination of PFAS).
- **Increasing Funding for the HousingWorks Program to Invest in the Infrastructure Necessary to Support the Growth of Housing (SB2850; Line-Item 7004-0083).** The HousingWorks Infrastructure Program (HousingWorks) has made investments throughout the state since 2023 (FY24). The program, patterned after the very successful MassWorks Infrastructure Program (MassWorks), has the potential to be a key facilitator for housing growth. Accordingly, the Senate's proposal for increasing the potential amount of bond funding to \$375 million, with \$100 million dedicated to water infrastructure, will allow for the ramping up and growth of this program to meet the anticipated growth necessary to support the significant increase in housing production. While HousingWorks is relatively new, the model is already a proven and successful one. Supporting the higher amount of funding will underpin the infrastructure needed to make new housing construction a reality.

- **Reviewing How the Interbasin Transfer Act Can Support the Growth of Housing and Address PFAS. (SB2859; Section 146).** Creating a commission to review and make recommendations on how the Interbasin Transfer Act (ITA) impacts the growth of housing and remediation of PFAS in the Commonwealth will provide the means for identifying future areas for potential action. The Massachusetts Interbasin Transfer Act (Mass. Gen. Laws Ch. 21, §§8B-8D) (ITA) became effective on March 8, 1984. The Act gave the Massachusetts Water Resources Commission (WRC) authority to approve or deny transfers of water or wastewater outside of its river basin of origin. Pursuant to the Act, the WRC promulgated regulations (313 CMR 4.00) defining and delineating the river basins of the Commonwealth and establishing application procedures and the criteria upon which the WRC bases its decision to approve or deny an interbasin transfer application. As an interbasin transfer is defined as any transfer of surface, groundwater, or wastewater of the Commonwealth outside of its river basin of origin, certain water authorities are held to a higher standard of compliance despite having an abundance of water under their control. Since the ITA was passed exactly 40 years ago, it is time to study this law to see whether it is meeting its original goal – particularly where there is an ability to meet a community’s water needs for developing new, affordable housing and/or addressing PFAS. Again, if we are serious about quickly advancing the development of new housing, we need to analyze every means and mechanism for facilitating its growth.

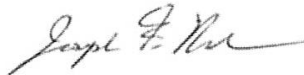
The Housing Bond Bill will serve as the launchpad for the Commonwealth’s affordable housing production. Without recognizing the key role water infrastructure plays in this growth, however, the opportunity to fully recognize the potential for creating substantial, affordable housing will be lost. We urge you to keep this connection in mind as you reach consensus on the final conference committee report. In short, supporting the aforementioned water infrastructure policies today will lead to increased housing production tomorrow.

We appreciate your consideration of these important initiatives. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,



Abbie R. Goodman  
Executive Director  
American Council of Engineering  
Companies of Massachusetts



Joseph F. Nolan  
Executive Director  
Utility Contractors’ Assoc.  
of New England



Jennifer A. Pederson  
Executive Director  
Massachusetts Water Works  
Association

Cc:

Honorable Lydia Edwards, Senate Chair  
Joint Committee on Housing

Honorable Peter Durant  
Assistant Senate Minority Leader

Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, Chair  
House Committee on Ways and Means

Honorable David DeCoste, Ranking Minority Member  
Joint Committee on Housing