



CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

Dominick Pangallo
Mayor

March 27, 2024

The Honorable Michael J. Rodrigues
Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
State House Room 212, Boston, MA 02108

The Honorable Aaron M. Michlewitz
Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means
State House Room 243, Boston, MA 02108

Dear Chair Rodrigues and Chair Michlewitz,

The City of Salem applauds your commitment and that of your legislative colleagues to addressing the urgent housing crisis in our Commonwealth. There is perhaps no greater challenge facing Massachusetts today, and Salem is certainly not immune from this issue.

In 2023 the Salem City Council voted to support a resolution in support of Access to Counsel and Eviction Sealings. Our community is working diligently and daily to assist residents with housing stability challenges, with a full-time staff person working exclusively on the issue and a Housing Stability Program started in 2022 that offers weekly drop-in hours for low-income residents to speak directly and for free with an attorney from the Essex County Bar Association about any legal matters affecting their housing. Despite all that we offer to residents dealing with housing instability the need is still profound. We urge state action to create an Access to Counsel program to provide more full legal representation for Massachusetts residents facing eviction. Eviction issues are one of the leading challenges both our staff and the Housing Stability Program work to address every day.

Evictions lead to homelessness, housing instability, overcrowding, displacement, and disruption of schooling for children, all of which are associated with negative health outcomes. The Boston Bar Association found that by providing full legal representation in eviction proceedings, the Commonwealth ultimately saves on costs associated with homelessness, including emergency assistance and shelter, health care, and foster care. In their report, full legal representation in eviction cases would cost the Commonwealth \$26.29 million while the cost savings associated with such representation are estimated to be \$63.02 million. For every dollar spent on full legal

representation in eviction cases, the Commonwealth saves approximately \$2.40 on the direct costs associated with homelessness.

I strongly encourage within your respective FY25 budgets \$3.5 Million (Line-item 0321-1800) to establish an Access to Counsel program in tandem with the full Access to Council bill language in S.864/H.4360, which provides the framework for a statewide program.

Thank you again for your continued leadership in addressing the housing crisis facing our communities and our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dominick Pangallo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dominick Pangallo
Mayor

CC: State Representative Manny Cruz
State Senator Joan Lovely
Salem City Council