



MASSBAR

A S S O C I A T I O N

September 28, 2023

Honorable Lydia Edwards
Senate Chair
Joint Committee on Housing
State House, Room 413F
Boston, MA 02133

Honorable James Arciero
House Chair
Joint Committee on Housing
State House, Room 38
Boston, MA 02133

Re: S.864 An act promoting access to counsel and housing stability in Massachusetts.

I write on behalf of the Massachusetts Bar Association and its 14,000 members throughout Massachusetts in support of the above-captioned legislation which would provide legal representation for both low-income tenants and low-income owner occupants in eviction proceedings, who meet eligibility requirements. The program, which would be administered by the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation would designate non-profit organizations to provide full legal representation.

It is clear that legal representation makes a difference. We saw that firsthand in 2020 when the temporary COVID Eviction Legal Help Project was established. Legal providers handled 4,698 eviction cases in Massachusetts resulting in positive outcomes in 92% of cases. We have a unique opportunity before us to create a permanent right to counsel program in Massachusetts. A permanent right to counsel program can prevent families from becoming homeless by offering a lifeline when faced with overwhelming task of representing yourself in court.

For the reasons stated above we encourage you to give S.864 a favorable report. Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Martin W. Healy".

Martin W. Healy
Chief Legal Counsel and
Chief Operating Officer