



February 15, 2024

House Ways and Means Chair Aaron M. Michlewitz
State House, 24 Beacon St.
Boston, MA, 02133

RE: Please Support an Access to Counsel Program for Evictions in the FY25 Budget

Dear Chair Michlewitz,

Thank you for your continued work to address our housing and homelessness crisis.

As property owners, we write to respectfully urge you to support the establishment of an Access to Counsel Program through a dedicated line item in your FY25 budget. We are grateful that Governor Healey established a new line-item (0321-1800) in her House 2 proposed budget funding a statewide Access to Counsel program, and would urge the House to include this line-item in tandem with **the full bill language of H.4360**, *An Act promoting access to counsel and housing stability in Massachusetts*, which was recently reported out favorably.

With shelters full, the need is urgent.

We have joined together as some of the largest property managers and property owners in Massachusetts to call for access to counsel for tenants and owner occupants. Legal help prevents families from homelessness, illegal or unnecessary evictions, and displacement, and creates a path to housing stability that will strengthen all of our communities for the future.

An access to counsel program would help prevent unbalanced and unfair results while also working toward housing stability. It will also result in cost savings to the Commonwealth and to property owners. Four other states, 1 county, and 17 cities across the country have access to counsel programs. It's time Massachusetts joins this list.

We urge you to seize this opportunity to invest in long-term housing stability reform by funding the phase-in of a statewide access to counsel program in your FY25 budget. This is a targeted cost-effective step that Massachusetts can take as we seek to address the burgeoning housing crisis, which has a proven return on investment as an upstream intervention.

Thank you.

Gilbert Winn, CEO, **WinnCompanies**
Janet Frazier, President, **Maloney Properties**
Dara Kovel, CEO, **Beacon Communities**
Melissa Fish-Crane, Principal & CEO, **The Peabody Companies**
Aaron Gornstein, President and CEO, **POAH**

cc: Representative Michael Day
Representative David Rogers
Blake Webber, Chief of Staff, Office of House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz
Tim Sheridan, Legislative Director, House Committee on Ways and Means