



Housing Production Legislation ([H.1288](#) & [S.775](#))

An Act relative to housing reform

Sponsored by Rep. Kevin Honan & Sen. Joseph Boncore

The CHAPA housing production bill was filed by Kevin Honan (D-Boston) and Joseph Boncore (D-Winthrop). The bill would require cities and towns with MBTA bus and rail service to plan for multifamily housing, makes it easier to approve “smart growth” developments with affordable housing, addresses frivolous abutter appeals, and sets a statewide goal to produce more housing that is affordable to Extremely Low Income households.

Representative Honan and Senator Boncore served as co-chairs of the state’s housing committee during the 2017-18 legislative session and worked together to shepherd a \$1.8 billion affordable housing bond bill through the state legislature, the largest in Massachusetts history.

Despite this tremendous commitment to funding affordable housing programs, zoning remains a key barrier to production. Massachusetts now has one of the lowest rates of housing production in the United States despite increasing population and employment. For multifamily production, 210 Massachusetts cities and towns haven’t permitted such a development in over a decade. At the same time, between 2007-2016 Boston alone permitted nearly 32% of all housing units in the state. The city of Boston cannot meet the regional demand on its own.

The housing production bill would require cities and towns to plan at least one district where multifamily housing could be built as-of-right. The mandate would only apply to municipalities with land in close proximity to either MBTA stations (1/2 mile) or with bus stops that are part of frequently traveled routes (1/4 mile), as identified by the MBTA service delivery plan.

Under the bill, if communities fail to comply with the mandate, they will be deemed ineligible to receive funds or grants from certain state grant programs. Municipalities would also be able to apply to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for a determination that either no stops or stations exist in proximity to land in the town, or their zoning is not unreasonably restrictive of housing growth. The determination would then be used to establish eligibility for state funds and grants.

The bill also includes the Governor’s housing choice legislation, which amends the state zoning act by lowering voting thresholds to a simple majority for certain zoning changes that promote housing production. Notably, the bill would make it easier to approve specific affordable housing projects located .5 miles from an MBTA station, or in city or town centers.

Building on Governor Baker’s goal of producing 135,000 units by 2025, the bill increases that goal (427,000 by 2040) and sets an affordable housing goal for 20% of that new housing to be affordable, with 10% dedicated to Extremely Low Income households. Lastly, the bill gives a court power to require abutters to post a bond before challenging a new development.



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