



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
House of Representatives
State House, Boston 02133-1054

To the members of the Special Town Meeting:

As the state representatives from Arlington, we write as your partners in addressing the housing shortage in Arlington and in the Greater Boston region. Massachusetts suffers from an acute housing deficit—over 200,000 units— leading to one of the most expensive housing markets in the nation. In Arlington, the impact is evident, with over a third of residents spending more than 30% of their income on housing, and 14% spending over half of their income.

To confront this challenge, the Legislature has taken a number of steps, including passing the MBTA Communities Law. Currently being implemented across the region, the law addresses the need for housing by providing for expanded multi-family zoning. While not perfect (no law is), this law is one of the most powerful tools we have to close the housing gap.

Ensuring access to housing is a fundamental issue of fairness and equity. Families burdened by skyrocketing housing costs are forced to skimp on other essentials, such as food, healthcare, or schooling. Moreover, those most acutely affected are often from historically disadvantaged groups — groups that all of us as elected officials have a responsibility to protect. In addition, many people who work in our community cannot afford to live here, unless they purchased a home a long time ago before the massive price increases of the last 10-15 years.

Of course, addressing this issue is not just a matter of social and economic justice; this problem directly affects our competitiveness as a state. Business groups point to the sky-high cost of housing as the greatest barrier to recruiting and training staff. Residents consistently cite unaffordability as their prime motivation when leaving for lower-cost states. This trend is particularly acute in younger people, who make up the bulk of the workforce. We must accommodate the next generation of workers, or our state will face economic costs for years to come.

We commend the MBTA Communities Working Group, along with the Arlington Redevelopment Board, each of which has done considerable work to arrive at the proposal currently before Town Meeting. We also would like to express our appreciation to the many residents who provided thoughtful public input in the shaping of this plan. We believe the plan in front of Town Meeting provides a meaningful framework to address the housing shortage in Arlington.

We recognize that each city and town have diverse needs, differing constraints, and a variety of possible solutions to implement the new law. As the elected representatives of Town Meeting, you are best placed to make decisions on the details of rezoning in Arlington. While the choice is entirely yours, as your partners at the state level, we want to emphasize our support for a robust implementation of the MBTA Communities Act. Adopting a strong plan will serve both as a foundation for progress in Arlington and also send a powerful message regionally.

Thank you again for your service to our community and for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Dave Rogers
State Representative (Arlington, Belmont, Cambridge)

Sean Garballey
State Representative (Arlington, Medford)