



GBIO Housing Justice Campaign

GBIO's multi-faceted, statewide *Housing Justice Campaign* focuses on public housing, affordable rental and homeownership opportunity, and housing access. We define *Housing Justice* as the ability for all people to have safe, healthy, and clean homes in their communities, and so are seeking to improve housing access and quality for groups that have been unfairly denied it, and to support financing, zoning, and ownership policies that help to close racial and class disparities in the housing market.

These campaigns all originate from the lived and recognized experiences in GBIO's base of 60 member congregations and organizations, representing some 107,000 individuals in Massachusetts, and are centered in our commitment to promote racial and economic justice.

Campaign Asks

Safe and Dignified State Public Housing

- Approve **\$184 million in operating funds** for Local Housing Authorities across the Commonwealth in the 2024 annual budget.
- Authorize through the 2023 **five-year housing bond bill, \$8.5 billion in capital funds** to sustain public housing facilities and work off the accumulated backlog of deferred capital projects.
- We support the Mass Union of Public Housing Tenants ask for \$7.7 million critical new "wrap-around" tenant support in the 2024 budget as well as MassNAHRO's ask for \$8 million for Resident Service Coordinators.

More Funding for Affordable Housing and Homeownership

- Pass **statewide enabling legislation** for a local option to collect **real estate transfer fees** to increase funding for affordable housing, (HD 2857/SD 1982).

Access to Quality Housing for Returning Citizens

- Pass SD.818 which would support **accessible housing by prioritizing Returning Citizens** in state-funded programs, and allocates emergency Section 8 vouchers for Returning Citizens.
- Pass SD.2090 so that **ALL** Returning Citizens are **guaranteed state IDs upon release**.

Increasing Housing Supply

- We ask the Healey Administration, Attorney General Campbell, state legislature, and local governments to **use all available tools to fully implement the MBTA Communities Act** and create more multifamily zoning, **without penalizing housing authorities and their tenants**.

Campaign Overview

Safe and Dignified State Public Housing

GBIO seeks to dramatically increase funding for operations, sustainable upkeep, and deferred maintenance in public housing. The lived experience of GBIO members in public housing tell us about the intolerable conditions they face every day. Our research reveals that for decades the State Legislature and Governor have failed to allocate anywhere near the funds needed for both healthy operations and the accumulating capital repairs required by the 43,000 units of state-funded public housing. Our asks reflect the true need of this valuable and essential Massachusetts asset.

Access to Quality Housing for Returning Citizens

GBIO will focus on promoting housing security by prioritizing Returning Citizens in Dept. of Housing and Community Development programs, understanding that stable housing is critical to ensuring public safety by reducing recidivism. Equally important, housing entirely depends on the possession of a state ID or driver's license, and a mandate to ensure that a state ID accompanies every Returning Citizen leaving incarceration is central to our work.

More Funding for Affordable Housing and Homeownership

GBIO seeks to bring new funds into local communities to be used for affordable rental housing and homeownership through passage by the legislature of the Real Estate Transfer Fee. This state legislation will allow municipalities to adopt a one-time, small fee on real estate sales over a certain transaction amount (e.g., \$2 million), whose proceeds will go into that community's affordable housing trust fund. These funds can be used for capital needs of new affordable housing projects, preservation of existing affordable housing properties, mortgage down payment support for first-time homebuyers, or rental subsidies for low-income households.

Increasing Housing Supply

GBIO will focus here on the implementation of the MBTA Communities Zoning Act to increase housing supply in local communities where GBIO has presence. This new law, passed in 2021, requires the 175 communities in central and eastern Massachusetts that are served by the MBTA's subway and commuter rail systems to create new zoning districts in which multi-family housing is permitted near transit stations at densities that are higher than currently allowed but still reasonable in transit-oriented locations. Low-density zoning that inhibits construction of multi-family properties has helped keep home prices high and out of reach for many, and the areas in our cities and towns near transit are natural and environmentally appropriate locations for such development. GBIO can build local leadership to support this rezoning process and ensure that local zoning changes include considerations of affordability.

BASIS FOR A \$184 MILLION NEED FOR THE FY 2024 PUBLIC HOUSING OPERATING SUBSIDY

The true need for the public housing operating subsidy in the FY 2024 state budget (**line 7004-9005**) exceeds \$200 million. Our demand is to double the current amount to \$184 million in FY 2024 and continue to increase it in real dollars over the next few years. State law (M.G.L.c.121B §32) requires the Commonwealth to fill the gap between the rents received from public housing tenants and the cost of operations, i.e., Subsidy = Actual Operating Costs less Rental Income. The appropriation for this subsidy has not come close to meeting this legal requirement.

ESTIMATE BASED ON HUD OPERATING SUBSIDY FOR FEDERALLY SUPPORTED PUBLIC HOUSING

The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development provides an operating subsidy for federally supported public housing. Although widely recognized to be insufficient, it far exceeds the current state subsidy. In 2022 the HUD subsidy was \$406 per unit per month.¹ Multiplying this number by the 43,000 state-supported public housing units in the Commonwealth would provide \$209 million in 2022 dollars.

CORROBORATION BASED ON 2005 HARVARD STUDY

In September 2005 the Harvard University Graduate School of Design published a study of operating costs for state-funded public housing in Massachusetts. It concluded the actual need for the state subsidy was \$341 per unit per month in 2005 dollars. In 2023 dollars, this translates into \$272 million.

PUBLIC HOUSING WOULD REMAIN THE COMMONWEALTH'S MOST COST-EFFECTIVE OPTION.

At \$184 million, or \$357 per month, the operating subsidy would still be the Commonwealth's most cost-effective housing for low-income seniors, families, and the disabled. Housing a family in a hotel room in Western Massachusetts cost \$3000/month in 2017.* Assisted living costs over \$4,000 per person per month anywhere in Massachusetts.^ Long-term care in nursing homes exceeds \$10,000 per month for a semi-private room everywhere in the state.* Enabling families to remain in public housing and allowing seniors to age in place and stay out of long-term care saves millions of dollars annually!

BASIS FOR A CAPITAL INVESTMENT NEED OF \$8.5 BILLION TO PRESERVE STATE-SUPPORTED PUBLIC HOUSING ACROSS MASSACHUSETTS

The Capital Planning System of the Department of Housing and Community Development catalogs the condition of every building and site in the public housing portfolio, providing local housing authorities with detailed technical information to make long-term investments. This system shows over \$3.9 billion in 2020 dollars of one-for-one replacement of items that have expired.* Soft costs, such as tenant relocation, architectural, engineering, legal fees, and remediation of hazardous materials, are not included. These typically increase costs by at least 30% bringing the base number to \$5.1 Billion. Furthermore, as the majority of the public housing developments are over 50 years old, most will need to be brought up to current building code for the safety of the residents that reside there. Sprinklers, fire alarm systems, arc fault breakers, ADA requirements, proper ventilation as well as stormwater management, and green community initiatives must be addressed. Local Housing Authority Executive Directors who are working with GBIO estimate these would cost \$3.4 billion in today's dollars. That brings the total to more than \$8.5 billion in today's dollars. Costs will only escalate over time.

¹ https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/PH_Dashboard. Accessed 3-2-23

* <https://www.wwp.com/news/how-many-homeless-families-still-live-in-hotels-in-western-massachusetts/>

^ <https://www.newyorklife.com/products/long-term-care-insurance/costs-of-care>