



Legislative Priorities for the 193rd Session of the Massachusetts Legislature 2/12/2023 Update

Improving Our Regional Transit Authorities:

Bill Name: *An Act to increase regional transit accessibility in the Commonwealth* ([HD.2385/SD.1762](#)).

Sponsors: Senator Su Moran, Representative Natalie Blais

Summary: This bill addresses many of the challenges faced by regional transit authorities in the Commonwealth. It ensures adequate funding and adjustments for inflation, dedicates 50% of Uber/Lyft fees paid to the Commonwealth to support regional transit, improves the state Regional Transit Authority Council by adding seats for riders and requiring annual reporting, and eliminates profitability as a performance metric for transit agencies.

Transforming Our Local Public Health System:

Bill Name: *An Act relative to accelerating improvements to the local and regional public health system to address disparities in the delivery of public health services (AKA SAPHE 2.0 Bill)* ([HD712/SD603](#))

Sponsors: Senator Jo Comerford, Representatives Hannah Kane and Denise Garlick.

Summary: This bill, which passed the House and Senate unanimously last session, builds on the lessons from the pandemic about the need for better, more equitable public health protections across the state. It will create regional equity by: (1) establishing state standards for local public health performance, guaranteeing everyone the same protection, regardless of zip code; (2) creating state workforce credentialing standards; (3) Increasing capacity at the local level by encouraging sharing of local public health services through state funding; and (4) Improving data collection and sharing through a uniform data collection and reporting system.

Allowing Spouses to be Compensated as Caregivers:

Bill Name: *An Act Allowing Spouses to Serve as Caregivers:* ([SD1974/HD3284](#))

Sponsors: Senator Jo Comerford, Representatives Adam Scanlon, Norman Orrall

Summary: Addresses the urgent home health care crisis by allowing spouses to be compensated for caregiving through programs administered by Mass Health. Currently other family members are allowed to receive payment for caregiving, but not spouses.

Providing High Quality Early Education:

Bill Name: *An Act providing affordable and accessible high quality early education and care to promote child development and well-being and support the economy in the Commonwealth.*
([SD667/HD2794](#))



Sponsors: Senator Jason Lewis, Representatives Kenneth Gordon & Adrian Madaro

Summary: This bill is part of a larger set of priorities known as the Common Start Agenda. It would provide financial support for families to access early childhood education, create a permanent mechanism to provide operating support for early childhood education providers, and improve the quality of early childhood education.

Improving Access to Affordable Housing

There are a number of CHIP affordable housing priorities this session; some are bills and others are changes to how the Commonwealth administers and funds housing programs. We appreciate our legislators' efforts to make sure that rural and smaller town interests are represented in the new administration's exciting work on addressing the housing crisis through creation of a new Secretariat, programs, regulations, funding. Below are two important pieces of legislation and two other actions we are tracking.

Name of Bill: *An Act granting a local option for a real estate transfer fee to fund affordable housing* ([SD1982/HD2857](#))

Sponsors: Senator Jo Comerford, Representatives Jason Lewis and Mike Connolly

Summary: A lack of affordable homes and speculative home sales by higher income buyers have led to soaring housing costs and displacement in Massachusetts. This legislation would allow Massachusetts cities and towns to opt-in to enact a small fee onto the sale of single family homes that exceed the area median sale price (tax would be on the amount above the median only) in order to create and support affordable housing. This legislation would generate thousands of dollars for affordable housing in our region each year by allowing communities to use this tool tailored to their needs.

Name of Bill: *An Act relative to regional municipal affordable housing trust funds* ([SD1942](#))

Sponsor: Senator Paul Mark

Summary: Amends the law to allow municipalities to sign agreements between them to create a regional municipal affordable housing trust. These housing trusts are excellent tools for setting aside funds like transfer fees, short term rental taxes, Community Preservation Act funds and other sources of revenue to help increase access to affordable housing, but for small towns it is difficult to gather enough funding on a town-by-town basis. This would allow groups of towns that already work together to build a regional fund together.

Changes to Program Administration and State Grants: FRCOG and the Franklin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority staff have met with Senator Comerford to submit a list of programmatic and grant changes that we will bring to the new Housing Secretary when s/he is in place.

The Housing Bond Bill: A Bond Bill is a request for funding for specific local and non-state owned capital investments. One focused on housing is expected to be filed by Governor Healey in spring 2023. It will provide a comprehensive approach to addressing the housing needs of the Commonwealth through resources to produce and preserve affordable homes and public housing. The Housing Bond Bill will recapitalize programs that serve diverse populations, including working families, the elderly, people with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness.

