

Planning Office for Urban Affairs

ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON

Written Testimony in Support of
An Act Relative to Community Housing and Services
Submitted by Lisa B. Alberghini, President
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Senator Eldridge, Representative Honan, and Members of the Joint Committee on Housing: thank you for the opportunity to comment on the important matter of supportive housing legislation. I submit testimony on behalf of the Planning Office for Urban Affairs of the Archdiocese of Boston, as President of that Office.

I would like to thank state legislators for your leadership in introducing *An Act Relative to Community Housing and Services* in the House and the Senate, which takes important steps to begin to implement a supportive housing model in Massachusetts.

The Planning Office has developed over 2,500 units of housing in metropolitan Boston in the last forty years, the majority of which are for vulnerable populations: elderly and disabled individuals, formerly homeless families and extremely low income families. We, and other housing developers like us, have long known that giving someone the key to an apartment is only the first step in helping those with the greatest needs live with dignity and respect. We know there are hundreds of very good service providers and networks in the Commonwealth to help people access physical and mental health care, job training, child care, quality education and development activities for their children, financial literacy and civic engagement programs – and yet what so many of us know is that the connections are missing and the connections require targeted resources.

Having supportive services funding in place in the developments where we make scarce capital and operating subsidy investments throughout the Commonwealth, stretches our dollars further, and helps people access the very valuable services and networks in their communities. Unfortunately, securing capital financing, rental assistance and services funds for a single development is at best inefficient and at worst, impossible. It is the exception, when it should be the rule. Too often supportive services funding is borrowed from other programs, built into already stretched capital budgets, or worse yet, not funded at all.

Real barriers exist and that is why we are strongly supportive of *An Act Relative to Community Housing and Services* as a smart and comprehensive approach, where the leadership comes from the top. Its provisions for state agencies to work together on an action plan, a demonstration program of 1,000 units and the establishment of an action grant for service coordination and housing support will finally begin to address this long-standing problem.

By breaking down the funding silos, multiple state agencies can achieve common objectives together. This is more than just an experiment, this is absolutely essential in the current resource environment. Resources are tight; and stable and supportive housing is a strategy that we know will save resources across all agencies and programs including mental health, human development, housing, health and human services, as well as improve the lives of thousands of Massachusetts residents.