



2019-2020 Legislative Priorities

(Please note that these priorities are subject to change)

Support Increasing Housing Production

- **The H.O.M.E. Bill**, developed by MAR in 2014, seeks to remove existing barriers to housing production through several complex zoning changes. For example, it would increase availability of open space or “cluster” development that allows for smaller lot acreage requirements than traditional subdivisions, thus diversifying housing options and preserving open space. The Bill also removes barriers to construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Commonly known as in-law apartments, ADUs are small, self-contained dwellings with their own entrance, kitchen, bathroom, and sleeping area associated with a single-family home. ADUs will provide more housing options and help homeowners enhance the value of their homes. Finally, it promotes local development by easing restrictions on zoning variance and site plan review procedures.
- **An Act to promote housing choices**, a bill that nearly passed with our support last session was again named by the Governor as one of his top priorities. The Bill gives municipalities more tools and incentives to increase housing development including: permitting cities and towns to modify zoning laws by simple majority rather than the current 2/3 majority vote for certain issues; increasing housing production options for smart growth zoning districts, such as allowing cluster development and ADUs; and enhances the ability to add housing near public transportation hubs.

Support Expanding Homeownership Opportunities

- **An Act authorizing the establishment of first-time homebuyer savings accounts**, permits future home buyers to deposit up to \$5,000 per year into a First Time Home Buyer Savings Account and then claim that contribution as a deduction on their income tax. This measure will help people save towards homeownership, leading in turn to wide-ranging economic and community benefits, including payment of property taxes, local business patronization, and community stability.
- **An Act relative to the relief of mortgage debt**, would align the state with a 2007 federal law, allowing homeowners to complete loan modifications, short sales, and foreclosures for which they have debt forgiven without making them liable to pay state taxes on the that debt. Currently, the amount of forgiven debt, sometimes referred to as phantom income, is treated as taxable income to the borrower, meaning distressed homeowners who need debt forgiveness are suddenly and counterintuitively faced with a large state tax bill. This bill would provide these individuals with some peace of mind and much needed monetary relief, increasing their potential for future homeownership.

Support REALTORS® Doing Their Jobs

- **An Act further regulating the continuing education requirements for real estate brokers and salespersons**, enhances the Real Estate Board’s authority to revise the rules and regulations governing continuing education requirements for real estate licensees. This bill would bring real estate in line with most other licensed professions by providing a greater ability to self-regulate, assuring that continuing education remains relevant and nimble while facing changes in technology and the profession.





Oppose Transfer Taxes

- REALTORS® strongly oppose any new real estate transfer taxes which authorize the creation of a tax on the sale of a home. The imposition of this type of tax on housing would have serious implications for the Massachusetts economy and set the wrong precedent for the Commonwealth's tax policies. The Governor proposed a transfer tax in the form a 50% increase in the deeds excise tax in a bill entitled, ***An Act providing for climate change adaptation infrastructure investments in the Commonwealth***. In addition, Massachusetts communities facing budgetary deficiencies regularly seek transfer tax authority to solve local revenue problems. However, creating an entrance or exit fee to homeownership is the wrong way to solve climate change or municipal funding problems. Transfer taxes increase the bottom-line price of most homes by thousands of dollars, providing an additional barrier to homeownership for many, while also inequitably singling out home buyers and sellers to carry a disproportionate weight in funding government programs.

Oppose Mandatory Energy Scoring

- We oppose bills and proposed regulations that would require sellers or their agents to have their home inspected and rated through a MassSave energy audit prior to listing a home for sale. In addition to having an enormous impact on an individual's right to freely transfer property, such requirements would negatively affect the real estate industry in the Commonwealth, which is home to some of the oldest housing stock in the country. Mandatory energy scoring of these older homes would significantly stigmatize and devalue many individuals' largest investment.