



Joint Committee on Housing—Public Hearing

May 14, 2019, Gardner Auditorium, The State House

Testimony in support of H.3507—An Act to promote housing choices

Chairman Honan, Chairman Crighton, and members of the Committee, my name is JD Chesloff. I am Executive Director of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable—a public policy organization comprised of CEOs and senior executives from some of the state’s largest employers, collectively employing more than 250,000 people across the Commonwealth. Our mission is to strengthen the state’s long-term economic vitality with the goal of making Massachusetts a highly-desirable place to do business.

To achieve that mission and goal, the Roundtable focuses on a variety of public policy issues identified by our members as priorities. Key among those is housing, which the Roundtable sees as an integral component of a comprehensive and integrated economic development strategy. We support H.3507, An Act to promote housing choices, as an important element of that strategy.

With that, I would like to convey two messages for your consideration:

First, with regard to the integrated economic development strategy: Housing policy does not exist in a vacuum. As workers move further from their places of employment due to the high cost of housing, they must have reliable options to get to and from work. Without them, productivity and morale suffer, and employers face an additional barrier to recruiting talent. As you know, there are active, productive and urgent conversations happening around investments in the state’s transportation infrastructure, as well as ongoing investment in talent. One need look no further than the support shown in both the House and Senate budget proposals to see the importance the legislature is placing on education and workforce development. A similar sense of urgency needs to be applied to the housing component of this strategy, which is why we respectfully urge the immediate passage of H.3507.

Partnering with the University of Massachusetts Boston Center for Collaborative Leadership, the Roundtable conducted a report a few years ago looking at the intersection of housing, transportation and workforce. One of the key findings of that report was that “viable public transportation and affordable housing inevitably result in higher rates of talent retention.” Simultaneous public policy attention and investment that recognizes the interrelationship between talent retention initiatives, transportation infrastructure and affordable housing, provides the interconnected growth strategy necessary for economic growth and job creation.

The second point involves that sense of urgency. While I previously mentioned that H.3507 is an important element of a comprehensive and integrated economic development strategy, it is clearly

not the only one related to housing. However, it is one that should be passed as soon as possible while the other elements are being debated and finalized. Much like education and transportation policy discussions don't end with the passage of legislation relative to them, similarly we expect the discussions on housing to continue in earnest after the passage of H.3507. Given the importance of the housing issue, the Roundtable will continue to advocate along with other stakeholders to ensure that is the case.

The Roundtable sees housing as an integral component of a comprehensive and integrated economic development strategy and supports H.3507 in an effort to increase housing stock to meet the overwhelming demand of a growing economy.

Thank you for your leadership and thoughtful attention to these issues.