



Legislative Priorities Talking Points

As you prepare for the 2021 Week of Advocacy, held in place of the 36th Annual Margaret C. Carlson REALTOR® Day on Beacon Hill, it is important to review the Realtor priorities for this year so you're able to discuss them with your legislators, clients, neighbors, and friends.

REALTORS® SUPPORT

Fair Housing Law Education (H.333//S.204) – REALTORS® recognize the significance of the Fair Housing Act and are steadfast in their commitment to upholding fair housing law as well as their commitment to offering equal professional service to all in their search for a home. To facilitate that mission, this bill would increase the number of fair housing education hours required for all real estate licensees: four hours in pre-licensing education and two hours biannually for continuing education.

First Time Homebuyer Savings Accounts (H.2840 and S.1834) – First time homebuyers face unprecedented challenges such as record highs in home prices and student loan debt. First time homebuyer savings accounts will help expand access to the American dream of home ownership. They allow future home buyers or their families to deposit up to \$5,000/year into a savings account and claim it as an income tax deduction. Gains are tax exempt and deductions are permitted for up to 15 years and \$50,000. Incentivizing home ownership has many benefits. Home ownership contributes to community responsibility; civic, economic, business and employment stability; family security and well-being. In addition, new home buyers average \$75,000 in related expenditures.

Housing Production – Thank your Legislators for enacting the Housing Choice legislation as part of last session's economic development bill (H.5250, *An Act enabling partnerships for growth*). Housing Choice changes local voting requirements from a 2/3rds super-majority to a simple majority for 10 zoning changes that promote best practices for housing growth. Examples include increasing housing production options for smart growth, starter home, and resource protection zoning districts and enhancing community ability to add housing with 10% affordable units in commercial centers and near public transportation. Urge them to become local housing development champions!

REALTORS® OPPOSE

Transfer Taxes (10+ bills) – Transfer taxes impose a sales tax on homes. They exacerbate Massachusetts longstanding housing affordability crisis by increasing the price of homeownership, often by thousands of dollars. This raises the barrier to homeownership many families already face due to the high cost of housing in Massachusetts. Rentals are also affected, as increased transaction costs are passed along to tenants. Transfer taxes also undermine the basic tenet of fairness in tax policy by forcing home buyers and sellers, about 2.5% of the population per year, to be the sole direct funders of community-wide responsibilities. Finally, they are not a stable funding source. The housing market is at best cyclical and often volatile. While MAR works to foster the strongest possible real estate market, it is unrealistic to expect stable funding from transfer taxes.

MAR applauds communities working to identify revenue sources to create and preserve affordable housing. These communities, however, should be using funds available to them from the Community Preservation Act (CPA). The CPA allows the residents of a municipality to raise additional revenue for affordable housing through a property tax surcharge and matching state funds.

Rent Control (H.1440//S.889, H.1378//S.886) – MAR opposes rent control in all forms. Rent control reduces the quality and quantity of available housing. It disincentivizes property owners and developers from investing in multifamily projects and properties because they will be unable to make those funds back. In addition, while it is designed to help those in-need, it actually un-levels the playing field, harming lower income individuals who will find shrinking inventory and units in disrepair. Finally, rent control is unfair. The costs of affordable housing should be borne by the entire community.