



Dear Secretary Augustus,

My name is _____ and I am a resident of _____.

As someone deeply concerned about the rising cost of housing in Massachusetts and the efforts of a few cities and towns to avoid their responsibilities under the MBTA Communities Act, I would like to offer a few comments on the emergency MBTA-CA regulations.

First and foremost, I urge you to reject any proposals to substantively change or weaken the Emergency Regulations. Instead, you should maintain them as written.

It is critical that you do so for three reasons.

1. Massachusetts needs more homes

For decades now, Massachusetts has not built enough homes to keep up with our growing economy and population. [A new report](#) from the Healey Administration estimates that we will need to build an additional 220,000 homes by 2035 to reign in housing costs and reverse the trend we see of young families leaving Massachusetts for more affordable states. We simply cannot afford to scale back one of the most important tools we have for increasing housing production when we need it most.

2. Building homes near public transportation is good policy

The MBTA Communities Act focuses on building near homes near public transportation because it accomplishes multiple important objectives simultaneously.

- It supports the MBTA, [which is yet to regain its pre-pandemic ridership levels](#), by locating new homes and riders in its immediate vicinity.
- In many communities, public transportation is located near town centers and business districts. Building more homes in these places means livelier town centers and more patrons for local businesses.
- Multi-family housing is more climate friendly than detached single-family homes. They are more energy efficient, limit sprawl, and when located near town centers lessen the need for a private vehicle for every outing.

Attempts to weaken the MBTA Communities Act not only make it more difficult to build the new homes we need, but also threaten our ability to meet key goals around climate change, supporting local businesses, and improving public transportation.

3. It is unreasonable to substantially change the rules now

The MBTA Communities Act was passed in 2021 and the initial guidelines were finalized after a thorough public engagement process in 2022. Since then, 114 cities and towns have followed the guidelines and complied with the law. They all did so under the assumption that these guidelines were final. To pull the rug out from underneath them by

changing the rules now would be unreasonable. Furthermore, it could trigger new referendums on passed zoning plans, drag residents back into Town Meeting to rehash old arguments, and further delay the implementation of this much needed law. The original guidelines went through a substantial community engagement process. The MBTA Communities law itself has not changed. Now is the time for implementation, not more talk.

In conclusion, I again ask that you maintain as written the Emergency Regulations issued by your Office on January 14th, 2025. They provide clear guidance on how cities and towns can comply with the law and are consistent with the guidelines previously issued. To change them now would move Massachusetts backwards and be enormously disruptive and unreasonable to the 114 cities and towns and their residents who have already complied with the law.