



Office of  
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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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## **Representative Kane supports \$6.5B bond bill to promote housing production and invest in local housing authorities**

**BOSTON** – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) recently joined with her colleagues to approve a \$6.5 billion bond bill to help address the state’s housing shortage and provide critical financial resources to local housing authorities.

House Bill 4707, *An Act relative to the Affordable Homes Act*, was engrossed by the House of Representatives on a vote of 145-13 on June 5. The bill uses a variety of approaches – ranging from tax credits to zoning policy changes – to modernize public housing; support housing production for the elderly, disabled, and homeless; and promote home ownership and rental housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents.

House Bill 4707 is a redrafted version of legislation originally filed by Governor Maura Healey as House Bill 4138 on October 18, 2023, but with some significant changes. Representative Kane noted the House bill does not include the governor’s controversial proposal to authorize a transfer tax of up to 2% on real estate transactions above \$1 million. It also deletes Healey’s proposal to make it easier to seal eviction records.

House Bill 4707 also does not address the problems some municipalities are having with the MBTA Communities Act, which requires designated communities to have at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right. Although Representative Kane supported several amendments during floor debate to assist communities, they were not successful.

According to Representative Kane, the Affordable Homes Act sets aside \$2 billion in grant funding to help municipal housing authorities rehabilitate public housing units to ensure they comply with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and carry out hazardous materials abatement, including lead paint and asbestos removal. Of this \$2 billion, \$150 million is targeted specifically for public housing initiatives that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote energy efficiency and electrification decarbonization.

Representative Kane said the bill also provides \$150 million in grants and technical assistance to cities and towns to assist with the conversion of commercial properties into multi-unit residential or mixed-use properties and authorizes the creation of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) of up to 900 square feet “by right” in areas zoned for single-family homes. ADUs are popular among homeowners looking to build additional housing on their property to be used by their adult children or their parents.

The Affordable Homes Act allocates \$1 billion to help the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority expand its water service area to communities on the South Shore and north of Boston within the Ipswich River Basin. Representative Kane said this expansion will help to ensure that efforts to expand housing in non-MWRA communities will not be impeded by a lack of access to clean water.

The Affordable Homes Act also includes:

- \$800 million for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund;
- \$425 million for the Housing Stabilization and Investment Trust Fund;
- \$20 million for housing and support services for veterans;
- \$250 million for sustainable and green housing initiatives;
- \$50 million for the Early Education and Out of School Time Capital Fund;
- \$50 million for the Massachusetts Healthy Homes Program to improve residential living conditions;
- an increase in the declared homestead exemption from \$500,000 to \$1 million to protect homeowners from creditors;
- new tax credits and incentives to promote first-time homeownership for economically disadvantaged individuals; and
- the development of a comprehensive housing plan for Massachusetts every five years to address housing supply, demand and affordability challenges.

During floor debate, Representative Kane supported three amendments to assist communities struggling to address the requirements of the MBTA Communities Act. One amendment, filed by Representative Marc Lombardo (R-Billerica), would provide an exemption for communities that have already reached the 10% affordable housing threshold under the state's 40B law, but it was defeated on a vote of 27-130. Another amendment, filed by House Minority Leader Bradley H. Jones, Jr. (R-North Reading) and House Republican Leadership, would require the state to consider the total net units of housing created by qualifying construction projects completed within the past five years for determining an MBTA community's compliance with the law, but it was rejected on a voice vote.

The third amendment, also filed by House Republican Leadership, was rejected on a vote of 32-126. It would require the Department of Housing and Community Development to develop and promulgate regulations allowing communities to appeal for relief from the provisions of the MBTA Communities Act. Appeals would be based on:

- the inability to meet the drinking water supply requirements necessary to support the housing units authorized by these provisions;
- the inability to meet the wastewater treatment requirements necessary to support these units;
- the inability of municipal transportation infrastructure to safely accommodate the increased population attributable to housing development pursuant to the law's provisions;
- any adverse environmental impacts attributable to the developments of housing units pursuant to these provisions; and
- any adverse impacts on historic properties.

Representative Kane was successful in getting two earmarks for Shrewsbury in the final House bill. An allocation of \$1,000,000 towards the construction of a connector road between Green Street and Shrewsbury Street to support the construction of 300 new units of housing, and another allocation for \$250,000 to the Shrewsbury Housing Authority for capital improvements in public housing. Representative Kate Donaghue (D-Westborough) and Representative Kane also successfully advocated for \$500,000 to the Westborough Affordable Housing Trust for capital improvement projects and the production of affordable housing.

Several other amendments were adopted during floor debate, including proposals to:

- establish a special commission to study and make recommendations on expanding the supply of affordable housing available to tenants with a household income of not more than 30 per cent of the area median income, with a report due by June 30, 2025;
- create a special commission to study and make recommendations on accessibility in housing for persons with disabilities and seniors, with a report due by June 30, 2025;
- create a local option providing tenants with an opportunity to purchase their property when it is being sold;

- amend the membership of the Architectural Access Board by requiring three members to be selected after consultation with advocacy groups on behalf of persons with disabilities; and
- require 5% of the units in lodging or residential facilities for hire, rent or lease, containing 20 or more units to be accessible to those with physical disabilities wherever constructed.

House Bill 4707, as amended, now moves to the Senate for its consideration.

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