



Greater Boston Interfaith Organization In-District Meeting

January 29, 2024

6:45 p.m. (GBIO pre-meeting)

7:00 p.m. start

Union Church, 14 Collins Road, Waban, MA 02468

2 minute walk from MBTA D Line (Waban); street parking nearby



Sen. Cynthia Creem

Brookline, Newton,
Wellesley



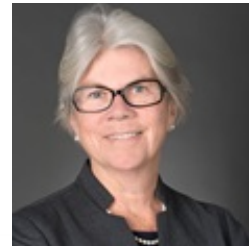
Rep. Ruth Balsler

Brookline, Newton



Rep. Kay Khan

Newton



Rep. Alice Peisch

Lincoln, Wellesley,
Weston

1. **GBIO Pre-Meeting**
2. **Welcome** - Julie Heffernan, Union Church–Newton
3. **Opening Prayer** - Rev. Megan Berkowitz, Union Church–Newton
4. **Introductions** - Liz Kadish, Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
5. **Framing and Ground Rules** - Matt Revis, Temple Sinai–Brookline
6. **The GBIO Asks**
 - a. **Public Housing**
 - Arlene Hill, Brookline public housing tenant leader
 - Renee Spencer, Wellesley public housing tenant leader
 - b. **Real Estate Transfer Fee**
 - Scot Osterweil, Temple Sinai–Brookline
 - Connor Israel, United Parish Church–Brookline
 - c. **Affordable Housing for Returning Citizens**
 - Amy Benjamin, Temple Beth Elohim–Wellesley
 - Ramadan Shabazz, Justice 4 Housing
 - d. **State IDs for Returning Citizens**

- Frank Laski, Union Church–Newton
- Mark Jones, United Parish Church–Brookline

7. Additional Remarks - The Legislators

8. Closing and Accountability - Matt Revis, Temple Sinai–Brookline

9. Closing Prayer - Rabbi Toba Spitzer, Congregation Dorshei Tzedek–Newton

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January 29, 2024

For Immediate Release

Massachusetts State Senator and Representatives Asked to Pledge Support for 3 Measures to Begin Addressing Commonwealth Housing Crisis

*Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO) to share constituent stories and ask **Senator Cynthia Creem** (1st Middlesex and Norfolk) and **Representatives Kay Kahn** (11th Middlesex), **Alice Peisch** (14th Norfolk), and **Ruth Balser** (12st Middlesex) to pledge their support for \$1.6 billion for Public Housing, Real Estate Transfer Fee enabling legislation, and housing support for returning citizens.*

Tonight at 7pm more than 200 community members and faith leaders will gather in Newton's Union Church (14 Collins Road, Waban, MA 02468) to share moving stories of the struggle to obtain safe, affordable housing and to ask their Beacon Hill representatives to publicly commit to supporting legislation and budget measure that can help begin to address the Commonwealth's severe, and worsening, affordable housing shortage.

"The affordable housing crisis in Massachusetts is one of the most urgent social justice issues facing us as a Commonwealth," said **Rabbi Toba Spitzer** of Congregation Dorshei Tzedek in Newton. "We are looking to the legislature to do the right thing and pass much-needed legislation to support state-funded public housing and to allow cities and towns to create the mechanisms they need, through the real estate transfer fee, to expand affordable housing options across the state."

This meeting is part of a campaign currently taking place across the region, organized by GBIO member organizations and their congregants. It aims to add support to financing, zoning and ownership policies that can help to close racial and class disparities in the housing market.

“GBIO seeks justice and dignity for everyone, and fair housing is an essential cause that deeply connects our members because it is such a deep reflection of our values,” said **GBIO Leader Matt Revis**, one of the organizers of the event.

PUBLIC HOUSING UPKEEP

GBIO research has found that for decades the State Legislature and Governor have failed to allocate anything close to the funds needed to properly operate and maintain the 43,000 units of state-funded public housing. The \$1.6 billion in bond financing that Governor Maura Healy has recommended would begin to address the operations, sustainable upkeep, and deferred maintenance of public housing.

In addition to asking Creem, Khan, Peisch, and Balser to support this bond measure, GBIO will ask them to publicly support \$189 million in operating funds for Local Housing Authorities across the state in the annual budget.

With this funding the Commonwealth has a chance to not only preserve quality affordable housing but also lead the way on climate justice through retrofitting and decarbonization of its units, which would create thousands of green jobs.

REAL ESTATE TRANSFER FEE MECHANISM FOR FUNDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

GBIO has also campaigned for statewide legislation to enable municipalities to collect RealEstate Transfer Fees, and the legislators will be asked for their support of this legislation as well.

These fees would provide necessary resources to expand and preserve affordable housing and homeownership across Massachusetts by allowing municipalities to adopt a one-time, small fee on real estate sales over a certain transaction amount (e.g., \$2 million), whose proceeds will go into that community’s affordable housing trust fund.

These monies can be used for capital needs of new affordable housing projects, preservation of existing affordable housing properties, mortgage down payment support for first-time homebuyers, or rental subsidies for low-income households.

RETURNING CITIZENS ACCESS TO QUALITY HOUSING

GBIO will ask representatives to help returning citizens get a chance at affordable, safe housing in two ways.

- First, by supporting \$9 million in rental assistance for returning citizens including first and last month rent and security deposit in a program that would be administered by reentry nonprofits.
- Second, by supporting passage of current legislation guaranteeing a state ID to returning citizens upon release. Citizens cannot obtain housing without the possession of a state ID or driver's license.

Stable housing is critical to ensuring public safety by reducing recidivism. Current costs to house an individual in prison are reaching \$130k per year, and adequate housing would cost a fraction of that. See [fact sheet](#) for more details.

“I see people like me who are trying re-enter, but who end up at Mass and Cass, and then go back into prison because they’ve lost hope,” says returning citizen and Newton resident, Ramadan Shabazz. “It’s sad to let a person who comes out hoping for some help, but everything we try and do hits roadblocks, bureaucracy. Instead, we have to fight to get ID’s, bank accounts, birth certificates. All we had in prison was hope, but when we get out, we need help, and we’re not getting it.”

The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO) is a broad-based organization of 58 dues-paying member churches, synagogues, mosques, and community organizations working across religious, racial, ethnic, class, and neighborhood lines for the public good. Our primary goal is to develop local leadership and organized power to fight for social, racial, and economic justice.

GBIO Legislation Overview



Housing Justice

GBIO's multi-faceted, statewide Housing Justice Campaign focuses on public housing, affordable rental and homeownership opportunity, and housing access. We define Housing Justice as the ability for all people to have safe, healthy and clean homes in their communities, and so are seeking to improve housing access and quality for groups that have been unfairly denied it, and to support financing, zoning and ownership policies that help to close racial and class disparities in the housing market.

These campaigns all originate from the lived and recognized experiences in GBIO's base of 60 member congregations and organizations, representing some 107,000 individuals in Massachusetts, and are centered in our commitment to promote racial and economic justice.

Campaign Asks

Safe and Dignified State Public Housing

- Approve **\$189 million in operating funds** for Local Housing Authorities across the Commonwealth in the 2024 annual budget.
- Authorize through the 2023 **five-year housing bond bill, at least \$1.6 billion in capital funds**, as has been included in the Governor's housing bond bill proposal, called the Affordable Homes Act; and develop a plan to address the \$8.5 billion capital needs in order to sustain public housing facilities and work off the accumulated backlog of deferred capital projects.

More Funding for Affordable Housing and Homeownership

- Pass statewide enabling legislation for a local option to collect real estate transfer fees to increase funding for affordable housing, (H.2747/S.1771), and **maintain real estate transfer fee legislation within the Governor's housing bond bill**, called the Affordable Homes Act.

Access to Quality Housing for Returning Citizens

- Approve \$9 million for **rental assistance for returning citizens** through a \$6 million increase to line item 7004-9034, "Housing Assistance for Re-Entry Transition," which

would provide first/last months' rent, security deposit, and 1 year+ of rental assistance for returning citizens, administered by reentry nonprofits.

- Pass S.1506/H.2326 so that ALL Returning Citizens are guaranteed state IDs upon release.

Increasing Housing Supply

- Continue to **use all available tools to fully implement the MBTA Communities Act** and create more multifamily zoning, **without penalizing housing authorities and their tenants.**

Why these Asks?

Safe and Dignified State Public Housing

GBIO seeks to dramatically increase funding for operations, sustainable upkeep, and deferred maintenance in public housing. The lived experience of GBIO members in public housing tell us about the intolerable conditions they face every day. Our research reveals that for decades the State Legislature and Governor have failed to allocate anywhere near the funds needed for both healthy operations and the accumulating capital repairs required by the 43,000 units of state-funded public housing. Our asks reflect the true need of this valuable and essential Massachusetts asset.

Access to Quality Housing for Returning Citizens

GBIO is focused on promoting housing security by supporting rental assistance for returning citizens, administered by returning citizen-led organizations like Justice 4 Housing. Stable housing is critical to ensuring public safety by reducing recidivism. Current costs to house an individual in prison are reaching \$130k per year, and adequate housing would cost a fraction of that. Returning citizen-led organizations provide higher quality case management and are more likely to work with clients with respect and understanding for their life experiences than other programs. Equally important, housing entirely depends on the possession of a state ID or driver's license, and a mandate to ensure that a state ID accompanies every Returning Citizen leaving incarceration is central to our work.

More Funding for Affordable Housing and Homeownership

GBIO seeks to bring new funds into local communities to be used for affordable rental housing and homeownership through passage by the legislature of the Real Estate Transfer Fee. This state legislation will allow municipalities to adopt a one-time, small fee on real estate sales over a certain transaction amount (e.g., \$2 million), whose proceeds will go into that community's affordable housing trust fund. These funds can be used for capital needs of new affordable housing projects, preservation of existing affordable housing properties, mortgage down payment support for first-time homebuyers, or rental subsidies for low-income households.

Increasing Housing Supply

GBIO will focus here on the implementation of the MBTA Communities Zoning Act to increase housing supply in local communities where GBIO has presence. This new law, passed in 2021, requires the 175 communities in central and eastern Massachusetts that are served by the MBTA's subway and commuter rail systems to create new zoning districts in which multi-family housing is permitted near transit stations at densities that are higher than currently allowed but still reasonable in transit-oriented locations. **This ask will most likely not be part of your IDM agenda, as it is a local, not state level action.**

