



CITY OF BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
MARTIN J. WALSH

January 13, 2020

Senator Brendan P. Crighton  
Chair, Joint Committee on Housing  
State House, Room 520  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Kevin G. Honan  
Chair, Joint Committee on Housing  
State House, Room 38  
Boston, MA 0213

Dear Chairman Crighton, Chairman Honan and Members of the Committee:

I write to you to express my support for H.1260/S.786, *An Act to Guarantee a Tenant's First Right of Refusal*, filed by Representative Daniel Cullinane and Senator Brendan P. Crighton. This bill would provide a tenant or their non-profit designee the right of first refusal to purchase a property of more than five units being offered for sale.

In 2014, I launched Boston 2030, an expansive plan for moving Boston forward. Included in that plan is Housing a Changing City, an outline of housing priorities. While the major goal of the plan is to stabilize Boston's housing market by expanding housing production by 69,000 units by 2030, the plan also calls for legislative efforts like this legislation. This legislation would prevent displacement and support housing stability for existing tenants while we continue to increase housing supply.

In 2019, 68 rental properties with 5 or more units were sold, totaling an estimated 538 renter households. In most cases, we see buildings being sold, emptied out, and then renovated to be higher income units. This legislation would supply municipalities with the tools they need to stop occurrences like this. This bill provides municipalities the ability to enact local ordinances requiring landlords to offer tenants or a non-profit designee acting on the tenants behalf, the ability to match any bona fide offer to purchase the property received by the landlord. This will protect tenants from displacement. This piece of legislation is modeled after successful programs in other cities, such as Washington, DC's Tenant Opportunity to Purchase (TOPA) Program and Boston's own existing ordinances that provides a right to purchase to tenants in properties undergoing condominium conversion. Municipalities that adopt the provisions of this law would require landlord's to notify the municipality and provide tenants of covered buildings with a notice of their rights under the law. Landlords who live in Massachusetts and own six or fewer rental units in the municipality are exempt from the requirements of the law. Also, local governments can choose to further exempt small properties from the law. With passage of this legislation, municipalities could place exemptions on properties smaller than five units and for older adults that rent and cannot afford to purchase, protecting them from displacement.

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This bill is about strengthening and protecting our residents. It is about making our City, as a whole, more stable and providing for more creative solutions to help our residents. We will continue to push for tools and resources to create more opportunities for residents. I look forward to working with you in the final stages of this legislative process. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly or you may also reach out to Alyssa Ring or Yissel Guerrero in my Office of Intergovernmental Relations at (617) 635-3817.

Sincerely,



Martin J. Walsh  
Mayor of Boston

CC: Senate President Karen E. Spilka  
House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo