



Town of Lexington, Massachusetts

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November 9, 2015

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Senator William N. Brownsberger
Senate Chairman
Joint Committee on Judiciary
State House, Room 504
Boston, MA 02133

Representative John V. Fernandes
House Chairman
Joint Committee on Judiciary
State House, Room 136
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Housing Court Access

Dear Chairman Brownsberger, Chairman Fernandes and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Town of Lexington enthusiastically supports and endorses S. 901 and H. 1656 to expand the housing court statewide. Lexington is a community which actively engages in housing issues. We are a Community Preservation Act (CPA) community which regularly pursues affordable housing opportunities and we have a non-profit municipal corporation called Lexington Housing Assistance Board (LexHAB) which owns rental housing throughout the Town. We are at 11.21 % on our Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) and always working to maintain or improve that ratio. Given our involvement in housing issues, it would be immensely helpful if we had access to adequate housing expertise at the judicial level to help mediate cases and reduce the cost of litigation. Moreover, given the complexity and variability of housing regulations, State and Federal laws and deed restrictions, it is essential that Housing Court judges are available to Lexington to provide the expertise we need to navigate these housing issues.

It is also important to note that Housing Court has the lowest cost per case across all court departments. Since we are spending public money when we have to litigate housing issues, the less we spend, the more able we are to reinvest in critical public housing preservation and expansion opportunities. Thus, it is critical that we keep our costs low to provide us with the ability to better serve the public.

Finally, Housing Courts help protect the safety and well-being of tenants when there are code violations and other life-safety issues effecting the dwellings which they occupy. When our Building Commissioner or other municipal employee uncovers code violations, we need to be able to have a rapid and decisive response in order to protect tenants. Housing Court is more effective than other court departments at turning around cases in a timely fashion.

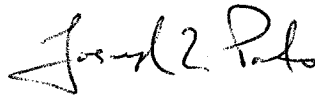
Senator William N. Brownsberger
Representative John V. Fernandes

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We believe that the proposed expansion of the Housing Court to Middlesex County communities will greatly enhance the housing and safety of the one-third of residents in the Commonwealth who do not have access to a housing court. We urge you to support S. 901 and H. 1656 and favorably report these bills out of Committee.

Thank you in advance for your support of this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph N. Pato". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Joseph N. Pato
Chairman

JNP/lap

cc: Senator Kenneth Donnelly
Senator Mike Barrett
Representative Jay Kaufman