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Mass. Association of Realtors testifies on housing legislation

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Since 2004 local communities have been able to apply for state aid when creating smart growth zoning districts.

Under state law, commonly referred to as chapter 40R, cities and towns can apply for state aid depending on the number of units created.

Under the companion law, chapter 40S, communities that see an increase in the number of school children can apply for additional state aid.

Together chapters 40R and 40S can be a step toward creating housing in some much needed parts of the state. However, one of the hesitations that communities have had is that annual state funding is not guaranteed.

The bill, which was filed in the house of representatives and senate, would specifically guarantee that funds are available each year.

As of July this year, 20 communities from across the state have either received state approval or are pending approval for their Chapter 40R districts. Among them, 11 communities have provided zoning as-of-right for over 2,900 units of housing, at least 20% of which will be affordable to households earning less than 80% of the area median income.

The Massachusetts Association of Realtors, with the Greater Boston Real Estate Board, testified in support of this measure to provide financial stability and certainty to a program that could help thousands realize the dream of home ownership in the bay state.

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