

# MASSACHUSETTS CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

## WEST END PLACE

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### INFORMATION AND NEWS RELEASE

**September 21, 2010**--Today the Roman Catholic Bishops in Massachusetts released a statement affirming their support for a state law advancing affordable housing in Massachusetts. The Affordable Housing Law, otherwise known as "Chapter 40B," is targeted for repeal on the November statewide ballot by Question 2. The Ordinaries of the Archdiocese of Boston, and the Dioceses of Fall River, Springfield, and Worcester urge a "no" vote on Question 2, in order to retain the law as an effective tool for promoting the building of affordable homes.

"The strength of the Bishops' support for the Affordable Housing Law underscores the significant need for affordable housing across the Commonwealth and the important work being done to meet that need," said Lisa Alberghini, President of the Planning Office for Urban Affairs, a nonprofit social justice ministry and the housing development office of the Archdiocese of Boston. "In our daily efforts to create vibrant communities through the development of high quality affordable and mixed income housing, we see first-hand this demand which is far from being met. Chapter 40B helps us provide residents of the Commonwealth with dignified, affordable homes, and should remain intact."

According to the Bishops, "Chapter 40B is a critical resource in the Commonwealth that should be preserved." In the statement, the Bishops cite stories from parishes and ministries as examples of why they support the Affordable Housing Law: homes lost to foreclosure; parents unable to find housing close to good schools; and the elderly and disabled unable to afford adequate housing. The full text of the statement is attached.

Lawmakers enacted Chapter 40B in 1969 to encourage the construction of affordable housing. The law operates through a combination of regulatory incentives and restrictions aimed at making at least ten percent of all housing in a community economically accessible. In support of Chapter 40B, the Bishops reflect on the considerable role the church has played in providing affordable homes and agree on the effectiveness of the Affordable Housing Law.

The Bishops conclude that "[v]oting 'no' on Question 2 will keep Chapter 40B on the books and thus preserve our state's ability to act in the most effective way to meet the need of every individual for a decent affordable home."

The statement is signed by Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley, Archdiocese of Boston, Bishop George W. Coleman, Diocese of Fall River, Bishop Timothy A. McDonnell, Diocese of Springfield, and Bishop Robert J. McManus, Diocese of Worcester. The Massachusetts Catholic Conference is the public policy office for the Bishops in the Commonwealth.

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**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF CHAPTER 40B,  
THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING LAW, AND IN OPPOSITION TO  
QUESTION 2 ON THE NOVEMBER 2, 2010 STATEWIDE BALLOT**

DATE: September 21, 2010

As the Roman Catholic Bishops in Massachusetts, we appeal today to the Catholic community and to our fellow citizens of Massachusetts to sustain and support the Massachusetts affordable housing law. We do this because Question 2, placed on the November 2nd statewide ballot, proposes to eliminate an important law that has been an essential part of our State's effort to provide housing for all the citizens of the Commonwealth since 1969. The Affordable Housing Law, often referred to by its statutory title, "Chapter 40B," has led to the construction of over 58,000 units for seniors, young working families and disabled persons in communities throughout Massachusetts. Chapter 40B is a critical resource in the Commonwealth, and it should be preserved.

Chapter 40B was established in part through the work of the Catholic Church to catalyze communities to build affordable housing. Through our diocesan social service offices, the Church has collaborated in the building of affordable homes and offered our support for community planning pursuant to Chapter 40B. Thus we know from experience that no other state program or tool has been as effective as Chapter 40B. The law has been responsible for approximately eighty percent of the housing for low and moderate income households created in suburban regions over the past decade. Moreover, one hundred cities and towns have implemented affordable housing plans because they recognize that Chapter 40B initiatives strengthen their neighborhoods and provide for their residents.

The stories we hear in our parishes and through our diocesan ministries are painful: families made homeless when they lost their house to foreclosure; families paying high rents for apartments that are in poor condition or are far from good schools and good jobs; young middle class families who cannot afford to buy homes in the communities in which they grew up; elderly residents on fixed incomes who choose between paying their rent and paying for costly prescription medications; and people with special needs who cannot find homes that are accessible. The current economic crisis affirms the connection between lack of affordable housing and the experience of personal hardship in so many other areas of life.

As Catholics, we believe in the dignity of the human person, and that a home is central to that dignity. Pope John XXIII wrote in 1963 in *Pacem in Terris* that every person "has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services." Pope John Paul II saw inadequate access to housing, along with unemployment, as

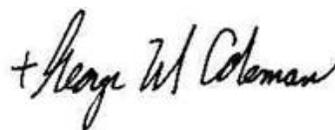
among the most serious problems of the developed world. He wrote in 1987, “the lack of housing, an extremely serious problem in itself, should be seen as a sign and summing-up of a whole series of shortcomings: economic, social, cultural or simply human in nature. Given the extent of the problem, we should need little convincing of how far we are from an authentic development of peoples.” The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote in 1975 in their pastoral letter *The Right to a Decent Home* that society must find better means to address housing shortages: “We must seek to have a qualitative impact on the problem of housing deprivation in our society by attempting to change the system and the policies that result in housing deprivation.” The Bishops added that working for better housing was not an isolated task, but instead was “indispensable to the future health of America and its people.”

The Commonwealth has developed policies such as Chapter 40B to build a better housing system. We must continue to be proactive in addressing our state’s critical housing needs; every community needs a mix of housing in order to be healthy, vibrant and inclusive. Repealing Chapter 40B would result in the loss of a valuable tool that has prompted many cities and towns to build homes for those otherwise unable to secure adequate housing.

Housing is a human right. In recognition of that right, Chapter 40B should remain in effect so that the public and private sectors can continue to promote the development of affordable and mixed-income housing throughout the Commonwealth. Voting “no” on Question 2 will keep Chapter 40B on the books and thus preserve our state’s ability to act in the most effective way to meet the need of every individual for a decent affordable home.



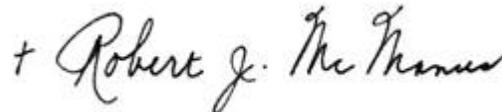
Cardinal Seán P. O’Malley  
Archbishop  
Archdiocese of Boston



Most Rev. George W. Coleman  
Bishop  
Diocese of Fall River



Most Rev. Timothy A. McDonnell  
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Diocese of Springfield



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