

May 28, 2026

Representative Aaron Michlewitz, Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA, 02133

Re: **S.3064, An Act to build resilience for Massachusetts communities (aka the “Mass Ready” Act) – Local Water Resources Bylaw Provisions**

Dear Chair Michlewitz,

The undersigned organizations would like to bring to your attention several provisions in S.3064, *An Act to build resilience for Massachusetts communities* (the “Mass Ready” Act) that are in conflict with this environmental bond bill’s purpose of investing in clean water and safe, climate resilient communities. We generally support the bill and appreciate the care for the environment that it represents. We are particularly supportive of the policy provisions to streamline permitting for ecological restoration and nature-based solutions.

We also recognize the severe housing crisis and the outsized role that plays in the affordability challenges so many residents face. Local water resources protections are a part of the solution to safe, resilient housing by ensuring the ongoing viability of local water supplies and avoiding new housing being at risk of flood damage.

The following sections should be removed from the House version:

- Section 60, Section 68 (lines 2630-2640), and Section 69 (lines 2687-2692) (together, amendment 264 in the Senate) exempt priority housing from local wastewater and wetlands bylaws that exceed the requirements of the state regulations under Title 5 and the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). These provisions create a false conflict between development of much-needed housing and the protection of water supplies and flood risk management.
- Section 108 (Senate amendment 267) would condition access to all state grant funding under the bond on municipalities adopting “non-restrictive” zoning and land use policies, including wastewater and wetlands regulations, that do not exceed state minimum standards. By creating a financial incentive to weaken local water protections, this amendment would place communities in the untenable position of choosing between critical, and already limited, public funding and the health of their water supplies, rivers, lakes, and estuaries.

More than 400,000 people in Massachusetts live in the 100-year floodplain, with affordable housing disproportionately located in high risk areas.¹ ² The risks on the coast are extensive.³ These hazards and costs are increasing with climate change, including sea level rise and increasingly intense precipitation events. State resiliency plans and programs prioritize local actions to reduce these hazards, including adoption of local wetlands, floodplain, and water resource protection bylaws.⁴ Every \$1 invested in climate resilience yields \$13 in benefits through avoided costs and economic benefits.⁵

State environmental standards are designed to establish a baseline level of protection; they are not intended to serve as a ceiling. For decades, the state has been encouraging communities to protect their water supplies and floodplains through local bylaws. If allowed to remain in the Mass Ready Act, these provisions would turn back the clock on those local protections at a time when they are needed more than ever.

Safe, resilient, and sustainable housing depends fundamentally on clean water, effective wastewater management, and protection from flooding and stormwater impacts. We strongly recommend that the House version of Mass Ready remove these harmful provisions and uphold the ability of municipalities to protect their water resources and prevent flood risks.

Sincerely,

Sam Anderson
Senior Director of Government Affairs
Mass Audubon
sanderson@massaudubon.org

Andrew Gottlieb
Executive Director
Association to Preserve Cape Cod

Laura Jasinski
Executive Director
Charles River Conservancy

Emily Norton
Executive Director
Charles River Watershed Association

¹ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/climate-hazard-assessment-profile-inland-flooding/download>

² <https://www.wbur.org/news/2020/12/02/climate-central-affordable-housing-sea-level-rise>

³ <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/resilientcoasts-initiative>

⁴ <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/resilientmass>

⁵ www.uschamber.com/security/the-preparedness-payoff-the-economic-benefits-of-investing-in-climate-resilience

John Keeley
President
Massachusetts Society of Municipal Conservation Professionals

Dorothy A. McGlincy
Executive Director
Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions

Cheryl A. Sbarra, Esq., Executive Director & Senior Staff Attorney
Michael R. Hugo, J.D., Director of Strategy & Government Affairs
Massachusetts Association of Health Boards

Philip D. Guerin
Executive Director
Massachusetts Coalition for Water Resources Stewardship

Dave McGlinchey
Executive Director
Massachusetts Rivers Alliance

Jennifer Pederson
Executive Director
Massachusetts Water Works Association

Patrick Herron
Executive Director
Mystic River Watershed Association

Samantha Woods
Executive Director
North and South Rivers Watershed Association

Heather Clish
Policy Director
The Trustees of Reservations

Meghan Jeans
Executive Director
Westport River Watershed Alliance