

Madalyn Letellier

From: Nicole Eigbrett <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, November 2, 2023 3:12 PM
To: Planning1; Public Comments
Cc: Nicole Eigbrett; [REDACTED]
Subject: CAAS testimony in support of MBTA zoning amendments
Attachments: 11.1.23 - CAAS testimony in support of MBTA zoning amendments.pdf

This email is from an external source. Use caution responding to it, opening attachments or clicking links.

Hello members of the Somerville Planning Board and City Council,

Please find the attached testimony from CAAS (the Community Action Agency of Somerville) in support of proposed MBTA zoning amendments heard in committee on 10/19/23. Please don't hesitate to contact myself or David Gibbs with any questions.

Best,
Nicole

Nicole Eigbrett | Director of Community Organizing
Pronouns: she, her, hers
Je parle français / Yo hablo español

Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc.
66-70 Union Square, Suite 201 | Somerville, MA 02143

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



Community Action Agency of Somerville

CAAS helps local families and individuals achieve financial security while working to eliminate the root causes of economic injustice.

November 1, 2023

RE: CAAS testimony in support of proposed MBTA zoning amendments

To the members of the Somerville Planning Board and City Council:

Since 1981, the Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS) has helped thousands of low-income Somerville residents to achieve economic stability through Head Start free early childhood education, housing stability and case management services, free tax filing, and collective empowerment through leadership development and community organizing.

We write to submit our strong support for the three zoning amendments related to the MBTA Communities Law heard in committee on Thursday, October 19: 1) remove the four unrelated persons maximum occupancy rule on housing; 2) allow three unit housing by right; and 3) require residential construction to be permitted by right.

When the MBTA Green Line Extension (GLX) opened in Somerville in March 2022, CAAS joined in celebration with residents who organized for more than 30 years for this public transit line, as a step forward for transit, economic, and environmental justice. But during this same period, our city has become one of the epicenters of the statewide affordable housing crisis. Building sales, condo conversions, and rental rates have skyrocketed across the city, but especially in GLX corridor neighborhoods. CAAS staff are on the frontlines organizing tenants to resist displacement from being priced out, and our agency delivers an average of \$100,000 in rental assistance each month to stabilize low-income and mostly immigrant renter households.

While continued tenant protections and anti-displacement policies are crucial to prevent the continued loss of low-income and working class residents, we also view targeted housing production as essential to solving this crisis. We believe these zoning reforms will encourage increased multi-family housing construction and redevelopment to ease the current demand for units, and we call on the City to also continue increasing our inclusionary zoning requirements.

Thank you for approving and enacting these zoning amendments swiftly, so that Somerville has one more tool to ensure that transit justice can *also* be housing justice.

Respectfully submitted,

David Gibbs, Executive Director

Nicole Eigbrett, Director of Community Organizing