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April 11, 2018

Alderperson Ben Ewen-Campen
28 Warren Ave., Apt. #5
Somerville, MA 02143

Dear Alderperson Ewen-Campen:

Members of Sheet Metal Workers Local 17 are deeply concerned by the Home Rule Petition being sought for the Clarendon Hill Project in Somerville, which would exempt it from the prevailing wage law that is sacrosanct to the high road construction industry.

M.G.L. c. 149 sections 26 to 27F make clear that construction, reconstruction, installation, demolition, maintenance and repair on publicly funded projects shall be subject to the prevailing wage law. This law has been critical to building and maintaining a vibrant middle class in our state and nation for decades. It simply prevents competition from artificially depressing local labor standards. Studies show that subverting prevailing wage laws often leads to shoddy construction and substantial cost overruns. Such a race to the bottom does not cut public construction costs; instead, worker skills, safety and productivity drop dramatically, shortcutting the long-term prosperity of our community for the short-term gain of a select few.

We agree that the residents of Clarendon Hill should reside in the best housing possible, and that high quality affordable housing in Somerville should be accessible to all. However, we are opposed to the notion of betraying one important mission for another, especially when a private interest stands to make tens of millions of dollars off this public-private "partnership."

One of the reasons our region faces such a deep affordable housing crisis is because of wage stagnation and race to the bottom workforce practices of too many unscrupulous employers. Giving developers the green light to pay workers less will only create more families in need of affordable housing.

On behalf of our local union, and the members of construction unions who live in Somerville, we ask you to please reject this Home Rule Petition.

Thank you for your public service and your attention to this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Robert Butler
Business Manager
Sheet Metal Workers Local 17