



THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053



Tori Kim
Director, MEPA Office
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Via Email: MEPA-regs@mass.gov

Re: Proposed MEPA regulatory changes: 301 CMR 11.00

Dear Director Kim:

As co-chairs of the Gateway Cities Legislative Caucus, we are pleased to submit testimony in strong support of the Healey-Driscoll administration's proposed changes to MEPA rules in 301 CMR 11.00.

In particular, we would like to highlight the following points:

1. We believe that streamlining the MEPA review of certain categories of projects will produce positive environmental outcomes by reducing permitting barriers to sensible, walkable forms of development in our cities and towns, as well as encourage ecological restoration;
2. These reforms will save the state, municipalities, and property owners time and money;
3. The proposed changes will support housing and mixed-use development in under-invested areas;
4. Urban renewal plans will be sensibly reviewed as conceptual plans, which will expedite the process of improving blighted properties;
5. A waiver process in certain rare instances, at the Secretary's discretion, would help avoid frustrating instances of projects that trigger environmental impact reports (EIR) even when they do no harm to the environment; and
6. The Special Review Procedure (SRP) separately proposed for urban renewal plans could be a useful complement to the regulatory reforms also recommended.

Our communities have increasingly grappled with MEPA issues holding up or discouraging new investment, especially since the 2021 Climate Roadmap bill vastly expanded MEPA review around environmental justice areas. We strongly support EJ goals and protections, but believe that the advance notification to EJ populations, improvements to the building code, and application of the state's smart growth principles already secure more positive outcomes for these historically impacted communities.

We represent many of these neighborhoods, and we know that the best path forward for them is for the state to facilitate investments in good jobs, more housing options, park improvements, and infrastructure modernization. These reforms would help make that possible.

For more detailed recommendations, we refer you to the letter submitted by MassINC's Gateway Cities Innovation Institute, which we endorse.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John J. Cronin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

John J. Cronin
Senator
Worcester and Middlesex

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tony Cabral". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

Antonio F.D. Cabral
Representative
13th Bristol