

*Department of Conservation and Recreation
Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

Stewardship Council

Stewardship Council

Whitney Hatch, Chair

Walter E. Bickford

John R. Buckley

Elisa K. Campbell

Heather A. Clish

Michele Hanss

Wayne A. Klockner

Chad J. McGuire

Christine L. Poff

Antonia M. Pollak

James P. VanDyke

October 9, 2015

Senator Michael J. Rodrigues, Chairman
Representative Jay R. Kaufman, Chairman
Joint Committee on Revenue
Rooms 213B and Room 34
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Report out Favorably H2533

Dear Chairman Rodrigues and Chairman Kaufman:

The Stewardship Council of the Department of Conservation and Recreation requests you report out favorably at your earliest convenience House Bill No. 2533 exempting certain persons who are part of the Historic Curatorship program within our state parks from paying real estate property taxes, filed by Rep. Brad Hill of Ipswich.

The Historic Curatorship Program was established in 1994 to enlist the help of private citizens in restoring and maintaining residences and other structures in our state parks which would otherwise deteriorate for lack of funding. Without gaining any ownership or other lasting rights to the property or structures these citizens, in exchange for long term occupancy leases, pay to rehabilitate, improve and maintain the public's historic properties in which they then live for the term of the lease. At the end of the lease term or if the lessee must end the term of the lease earlier the properties and all improvements revert back to the Commonwealth.

It has come to our attention that two municipalities, and only two, have decided to levy property taxes on a curatorship lessee's house notwithstanding the fact the house is owned by a state park facility which itself is exempt from property taxes. If this municipal practice was to spread we believe it would ring the death knell of the Historic Curatorship Program by which so many historic gems have been renovated entirely at the lessees' expense, many available to the public for functions or occasional open houses as a result of the improvements and cooperation of the curator lessees. A quick scan of DCR's before and after photographs attest to the significant investments our curators are making in our public facilities.

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/stewardship/curator/hcp-before-after.pdf>

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Representative Jay R. Kaufman, Chairman
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Passing this bill into law will have no effect on the revenue of the Commonwealth's general treasury. We are available to discuss this matter further. Thank you for your timely attention and cooperation.

Sincerely,



Whitney Hatch
Chairman

DCR Stewardship Council:

Walter E. Bickford
Worcester County, Berlin

John R. Buckley
Plymouth County, Abington

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Hampshire County, Amherst

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Bristol County, Dartmouth

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Suffolk County, Boston

Antonia M. Pollak
Suffolk County, Charlestown

James P. VanDyke
Berkshire County, Hancock

cc: *Rep. Brad Hill*
Sen. Bruce Tarr
Sen. Dan Wolf
Commissioner Carol Sanchez