

October 16, 2025

Via Electronic Mail

The Hon. John Cronin, Chair
Joint Committee on Public Safety
and Homeland Security
State House, Room 218
Boston, MA 02133
John.Cronin@masenate.gov

The Hon. Daniel Cahill, Chair
Joint Committee on Public Safety
and Homeland Security
State House, Room 527-A
Boston, MA 02133
Daniel.Cahill@mahouse.gov

Re: Senate 1650, Municipal & Public Safety Building Authority

Dear Chairs Cronin and Cahill:

I write to you in support of legislation to establish a Municipal and Public Safety Building Authority, as described in Senate 1650, *An Act Creating a Municipal and Public Safety Building Authority*, filed by Senator Comerford.

As the Commonwealth's Inspector General, I often hear from municipal leaders that one of their most pressing challenges is covering the costs of designing, constructing, maintaining, and safely using their public buildings as those facilities age and community needs grow. Senate 1650 would establish an independent public authority to provide matching funds for the construction or improvement of municipal and public safety buildings such as police stations, fire stations, municipal offices, and other facilities.

Public buildings are essential to municipal operations. However, municipalities often do not have the tax base to cover the full cost of building, rebuilding, or substantially renovating their facilities as municipal operations modernize and expand. Out of 351 municipalities in Massachusetts, 190 have a population under 12,000 and 63 have a population under 2,000. In addition, a number of Commonwealth communities do not have a strong mix of residential, commercial, and industrial properties to balance the tax base and are instead overly reliant on residential taxes. Further, residents in these towns are often aging, leading to an increasingly vulnerable population more dependent on municipal services. While new technologies and developments in communication capabilities and building design can make municipal operations more efficient, implementing such improvements may necessitate costly construction or renovations.

Part of my office's role is to oversee public construction projects through a review of municipal applications to use the construction management at-risk delivery method authorized by Chapter 149A of the Massachusetts General Laws. In that capacity, the office often interfaces with communities that are attempting to maximize their limited resources. For example, a town may have to construct a new building on an existing town-owned parcel, notwithstanding difficult site conditions. But those conditions could require the town to bring on costly architects, engineers,

and consultants. A statewide authority that municipalities could turn to for funding, technical expertise, and guidance would help to alleviate those pressures.

Senate 1650 models the municipal and public safety building authority on existing authorities, such as the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program offered through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC).

The authority would administer geographically diverse funding, with no less than 10% of its financial assistance going to municipal building and public safety projects in rural cities and towns. The ability to finance projects over longer periods of time would unlock a line of credit not typically available to smaller local governments.

In addition to being a financial resource for cities and towns, the new authority would oversee construction spending and project management through its application process, with an emphasis on thoughtful community development and environmental benefits. The authority would provide architectural and technical assistance, training, and education, which would particularly benefit smaller municipalities that may lack technical expertise.

I urge the committee to support this legislation. The municipal and public safety building authority established by Senate 1650 would be a valuable tool for the cities and towns across the Commonwealth, including those that you represent.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 617-722-8806 or Jeffrey.S.Shapiro@mass.gov, or Joshua Giles, Director of Government Outreach and Public Policy, at 617-719-8225 or Joshua.Giles@mass.gov.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey S. Shapiro, Esq., CIG
Inspector General

cc (by email):

Senator Joanne Comerford

Joshua Giles, Director of Government Outreach and Public Policy, OIG

Nataliya Urciuoli, Senior Executive Assistant, OIG