

Mass Union of Public Housing Tenants

784 Washington Street, Suite 504

Dorchester, MA 02124

Mr. Marc Draisen

Executive Director

Metropolitan Area Planning Council

60 Temple Place

Boston, MA 02111

Dear Mr. Draisen,

We write to offer our support for the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Implementation Grant application submitted by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in partnership with the Boston, Chelsea, and Lowell Housing Authorities. The Greater Boston Affordable Housing Decarbonization Accelerator (AHDA) proposed by this coalition application supports key pathways for accelerating building decarbonization and serving environmental justice communities to meet the Commonwealth’s 2050 climate goals.

Decarbonizing existing buildings is critical to achieving Massachusetts’s greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets. While using net zero and Passive House standards is more common in new affordable multifamily construction projects, most residential buildings that will exist in 2050 are already constructed. This includes hundreds of thousands of units of affordable housing, which are among the most inefficient and carbon-emitting buildings in the Commonwealth and house populations least able to afford or make retrofits. Numerous studies conducted by the Commonwealth’s agencies have identified needs for funding, resources, and technical assistance to help owners of affordable housing, particularly Public Housing Authorities, address these challenges and ensure that low-income and marginalized populations are not left behind in the clean energy transformation. Furthermore, decarbonization retrofits, in conjunction with removal of gas cooking equipment and improved ventilation, can improve indoor air quality and provide substantial health benefits to occupants.

The Mass Union of Public Housing Tenants is excited to be a partner in implementing the AHDA. Our board is entirely comprised of public housing tenants. We are run by tenants for tenants, and our mission is to improve quality of life in public housing. Our core work is to organize democratically elected tenant organizations across Massachusetts. We support these groups to weigh in on decision-making at their housing authorities in areas such as capital planning, policies and procedures, staffing, budgeting, and redevelopment. Supporting tenant engagement in these retrofits is a natural extension of such work; we have the capacity and skills to effectively communicate with tenants about the changes that will happen to their homes, and to meaningfully engage them in the process so that their lived experience can inform decision-making in helpful ways. In addition, Mass Union’s membership in the Energy Cohort will create connections between our tenant communities and coalitions working on energy issues. This will position all of us well for long-term collaboration.

As a Regional Planning Agency (RPA), MAPC is uniquely situated to lead many aspects of this proposal including overseeing the technical assistance program, development of collective and streamlined procurement pathways, and facilitation of the regional community of practice. The agency has partnered with these municipalities and their housing authorities in the past to accomplish programs such as installing affordable and reliable high-speed internet for residents in existing housing authority complexes. MAPC administers technical assistance and grant awards through its Technical Assistance Program and Accelerating Climate Resilience grant program and regularly facilitates regional dialogues around key climate issues. Further, the agency’s collective procurement work has streamlined the competitive procurement process cities and towns need to undertake to purchase clean and energy efficient products and services.

The regionalized approach of the AHDA will support stakeholders in affordable housing across the Greater Boston region in developing and implementing plans for reducing GHG emissions and other harmful air pollutants in the buildings and populations where investment is most critically needed. In closing, we wish to express our support for and commitment to working with MAPC’s Greater Boston Affordable Housing Decarbonization Accelerator and ask that the review committee give their application full and fair consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Byrnes

Executive Director