



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

May 23, 2008

Re: Support for Senate Bills 2662, 2663 and 2664 and House Bills 4733, 4734, 4735

Dear Fellow Mayor,

I am writing today to request your support of three bills recently submitted to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary that will mitigate the effects of foreclosures and vacancies in our municipalities. We have all been alarmed to witness the escalating number of foreclosed and abandoned properties in neighborhoods across the commonwealth. I now strongly urge you to join me in supporting the passage of these important bills.

- An Act to Require Judicial Foreclosure, Senate Bill 2662 and House Bill 4735, creates an element of basic fairness in the foreclosure process. Homeowners facing foreclosure and displacement deserve the opportunity to defend against foreclosure in court and this bill would provide that forum.
- An Act Relative to a Temporary Moratorium on Foreclosures, Senate Bill 2663 and House Bill 4733, will provide a one-time six month respite from the ongoing avalanche of foreclosures in order to develop ways to avoid future incidences. Every week between 500 and 800 petitions to foreclose are filed in the Commonwealth. Our foreclosure counselors simply cannot keep up with that volume. This six month halt would give the public and private counseling agencies the opportunity to work on saving these properties.
- An Act Requiring Just Cause for Eviction and Foreclosed Properties, Senate Bill 2664 and House Bill 4734, will help to stem the tide of unwarranted vacancies and stabilize communities. It is often not the foreclosures themselves that degrade the quality of life in our neighborhoods, but the abandoned buildings left behind. This bill would allow rent paying tenants to remain in foreclosed properties while that property is sold to a subsequent purchaser, preventing the blight of vacant properties in our neighborhoods.

These bills will play a critical role in mitigating the disastrous consequences of foreclosure and displacement. Most important, they will give families and communities much needed time to develop workable solutions to avoid further vacancies and declining property values. These foreclosure evictions are leading to increased homelessness, doubling up of families in overcrowded apartments, children leaving their schools at a higher rate, and elderly people losing their homes or apartments.

As Mayor of Somerville, my first priority is the safety and security of my residents. Adoption and implementation of these bills is essential to ensuring that safety and security during the ongoing foreclosure crisis. I strongly urge you to reach out to your respective legislative delegation and express your support for passage of these three bills. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Curtatone
Mayor