



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

February 18, 2026

**Cape Cod Regional Government  
Assembly of Delegates  
2026 Session**

**Re: Public comment; proposed Home Rule Petition No. 1**

Dear Speaker Warner and Members of the Assembly:

We write to submit public comment in strong support of the Barnstable County Home Rule Petition to establish a high-value real estate transfer fee dedicated to year-round housing. As the legislators representing Cape Cod, enacting a transfer fee is among our top priorities.

Cape Cod is in a full-blown housing crisis. The Assembly has already declared it as such. Home prices have far outpaced local wages. Year-round housing stock continues to shrink. Investor-driven purchases and second-home conversions are accelerating displacement. We are losing teachers, nurses, police officers, firefighters, hospitality workers, and young families because they simply cannot afford to live here. Without new, reliable revenue, this trend will continue. This home rule petition represents a thoughtful, regionally coordinated effort to provide one additional, locally controlled tool to address this crisis.

The proposal would authorize Barnstable County to impose a modest transfer fee on the portion of high-value real estate transactions above a defined threshold. It would apply only to higher-end sales, minimizing impact on workforce housing. Standard exemptions would include family transfers, government transactions, court-ordered transfers, and deed-restricted affordable housing. Participating towns could opt in or out by vote of their local legislative body, preserving local control.

Revenues would flow into a Cape Cod Year-Round Housing Trust, with flexibility either to support regional housing programs—such as purchasing year-round deed restrictions or launching lease-to-locals initiatives—or to distribute funds back to participating towns in proportion to local collections. The framework emphasizes transparency, annual reporting, and strong administrative safeguards to ensure accountability.

This is not a new or radical idea. Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Land Banks provide precedent for regionally administered transfer fees. Other high-demand markets across the country have successfully implemented similar tools to stabilize year-round housing in communities overwhelmed by second-home and investment pressures.

At the State House, we are pursuing transfer fee authority from every angle. S1434 would create a statewide fee on transactions over \$2 million and tie participation to zoning reform. S966 & H4410 would allow seasonal communities to adopt a fee between 0.5% and 2% for housing trusts. Six individual home rule petitions from Chatham, Falmouth, Provincetown, Truro, Eastham, and Wellfleet are also pending.

We are approaching this housing crisis from every direction: statewide policy, seasonal community authority, and town-by-town petitions. The Barnstable County proposal offers something particularly compelling—a coordinated regional approach.

Administering a transfer fee requires systems for collection, compliance, oversight, and reporting. A county-level structure can reduce duplication, streamline administration, and create efficiencies that would be difficult for each town to build independently. Housing markets on Cape Cod are regional. Our response should reflect that reality.

This home rule petition does not mandate a fee. It simply gives Cape legislators—and Cape towns—the tool they have asked for and need. It empowers local communities to decide whether and how to participate. It creates a scalable, predictable revenue source dedicated exclusively to year-round housing. And it acknowledges that we cannot build our way out of this crisis without a reliable funding stream.

For too many families, the dream of living in the community where they grew up or where they work is slipping away. This petition gives us one possible way to get this across the finish line. Barnstable County needs this tool. Our towns are asking for it. Our residents are demanding action. We urge you to move this petition forward so that we can confront this housing emergency with the seriousness it requires.

Respectfully,



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State Senator  
Cape & Islands District



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State Senator  
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