



The Honorable James Welch, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Michael Kane, House Chair  
Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government  
State House, Room 540  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairman Welch and Chairman Kane,

The American Heart/Stroke Association **supports legislation, Senate Bill #1019, *Comprehensive Land Use Reform and Partnership Act***. The American Heart/Stroke Association (AHA) is the largest voluntary health organization in the world who is working to build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular disease (CVD) and stroke-the number-two and number-three killers in Massachusetts. The AHA, as a member of the Act FRESH Leadership team, supports this proposal, because it will directly aid in building healthier lives.

Local zoning codes are the critical to the growth of communities. However, in Massachusetts, the vast majority of these codes have not been updated in years. Old zoning codes have too often stunted economic development, while prohibiting healthy land uses such as grocery stores. Smarter zoning codes can help change this by promoting community features like, mixed commercial-residential districts that can encourage walking and biking and increase community safety; preservation of open space that promotes active recreation, conservation, and agriculture and improved access to healthy food choices. These are features that help make our communities healthy, inclusive, and prosperous. These changes will benefit everyone, but will have the greatest impact on vulnerable populations. In order to move toward local zoning codes that promote long-term health benefits, we must reform our state's out-of-date zoning laws.

This legislation would requires that every city and town have a master plan – informed by community input – and that local zoning codes align with those master plans. It would create a new *Partnership Communities* Program that will prioritize state funding and technical assistance for cities and towns that adopt higher standards consistent with state health, environmental, housing, and economic development goals. It would gives cities and towns new tools to review subdivision plans and to encourage walkable and bikeable streets and areas for play and recreation, while seeking to conserve open space. It would formalize guidelines for the impact fees, fees that developers pay to cities and towns that can support public transit, sidewalks, bike paths, and parks. I appreciate your time and consideration on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Allyson Perron  
Senior Government Relations Director  
American Heart/American Stroke Association  
[Allyson.perron@heart.org](mailto:Allyson.perron@heart.org)  
508-935-3943