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ABUNDANT HOUSING MASSACHUSETTS

HMA

I’m just a bill (In Massachusetts)

September 26, 2026

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Review Session Goals
3. Identify and Understand Legislative Leadership
4. Review Legislative Calendar & Key Moments
5. Discuss Tips for Supercharging your Advocacy
6. Q&A



Meet the Speakers



Mike Kriesberg
Policy & Advocacy Manager
Abundant Housing Massachusetts



Alex Chilton
Legislative Director
Office of Senator Brendan Crighton

Session Goals

By the end of this session you will be able to…

1. Identify the key actors in the Massachusetts legislative process and understand their roles and influence.
2. Understand the basic timeline and major stages of how a bill moves through the legislature.
3. Recognize the key moments when advocacy can influence the legislative process.
4. Learn practical strategies for making your advocacy timely, targeted, and effective.



The Big Six

- To understand how housing policy is developed and passed on Beacon Hill, you need to know the key decision makers in this space.
- For our purposes, we're calling them "The Big Six".
- These policy makers all play different and crucial roles in advancing housing legislation.



The Big Six (Joint Chairs of Housing)



Representative Richard Haggerty



Senator Julian Cyr

- These legislators jointly chair the Committee on Housing.
- They hold public hearings and can advance, study, or revise legislation.
- They are the point people for housing policy in each chamber.

The Big Six (Ways & Means Chairs)



HWM Chair Aaron Michlewitz



SWM Chair Michael Rodrigues

- The Ways & Means Chairs manage the details of drafting legislation.
- They write the annual budget and provide final review for all legislation.
- They are responsible for turning legislative ideas into actual law.

The Big Six (House Speaker & Senate President)



House Speaker Ron Mariano



Senate President Karen Spilka

- Speaker and Senate President lead their respective chambers.
- They balance the interests of membership and set big picture strategy.
- They have the final call on which policies leadership advances.

The Big Six

- There are lots of ways The Big Six can craft legislation.
- Ideas can come up from the committees and catch the attention of leadership.
- They can also come from the top down, with consultation from committee chairs and Ways & Means.
- Regardless of where the idea comes from, the process of advancing legislation requires collaboration from all of The Big Six.



Legislative Calendar - Year 1

Time	What's happening
September - December (Preceding year)	• Policy development • Early coalition build • Confirm bill filers
January - March	• File bills • Obtain co-sponsors and early education • Establish joint rules • Receive committee assignments • Review Governor's budget



Legislative Calendar - Year 1

Time	What's happening	Full Budget Process
April-July	• House budget (April) • Senate budget (May) • Final budget due June 30th (often completed in July)	• Governor's Budget • House Ways and Means Budget • House Debate • House Budget • Senate Ways and Means Budget • Senate Debate • Senate Budget • Conference Committee • Final Budget
August-December	• Non-budget bill hearings • First decision on bills	



Sidebar - Inside and Outside Sections

- There are two parts to the budget **- inside and outside sections**.
- Inside sections are specific spending allocations, for example, $280 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program.
- Outside sections are policy reforms that do not come with a spending allocation.



Legislative Calendar - Year 2

Time	What's happening
January	• Governor's budget
February-July	• House budget (April) • Senate budget (May) • Final budget due June 30th (often completed in July) • Other "major bills" begin to move
August-December	• Informal session • Conference committee negotiations



Sidebar - “Vehicles”

- Massachusetts is one of only seven states that allow omnibus bills covering multiple subjects. This allows legislators to include policy reforms in spending bills.
- Big “must-pass” bills like the budget, economic development bills, and other spending/bond authorization bills become **vehicles** for carrying individual policies to the Governor’s desk.



Key moments

Key Moments	Description	What can advocates do
Bill Filing	Legislators may “co-sponsor” another bill This is an early indication of support for a bill filed by another member	Ask your representatives to co-sponsor a specific bill
Bill Hearings	Every filed bill receives at least one public hearing. Members of the public may submit comments on the bill during or immediately after the hearing.	Submit testimony Ask other individuals/organizations to submit testimony
Floor Debate	A floor debate occurs before members vote on a bill. Debate includes discussion on the bill itself, as well as any proposed amendments.	Ask your representatives to either support/oppose the bill *and* support/oppose any specific amendments
Conference Committee	Once a bill is passed by each chamber, it is sent to a conference committee of House and Senate members. Those members negotiate a compromise bill that is sent back to each chamber for a vote.	Ask your representatives to contact conference committee members



Supercharging your Advocacy

1. Form a local group
2. Connect it to the district
3. Build relationships with legislators & staff
4. Understand when decisions are being made - and reach out then



Questions?



Thank You

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