Rep. Richard Haggerty, House Chair
Sen. Julian Cyr, Senate Chair
Joint Committee on Housing
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street, Room 146
Boston, MA 02133

Via E-Mail:

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Re: Support for H3934 – A Bill to Create a Plymouth Land Bank

Dear Senator Cyr and Representative Haggerty:

As you are aware, currently pending before the Joint Housing Committee is a home rule petition to allow the Town of Plymouth to create the Plymouth Land Bank. This legislation would afford the Town of Plymouth the ability to address its most crucial needs; preservation of critical open space for aquifer protection, creation of genuinely affordable housing, and planning for future municipal facilities and infrastructure without putting a further financial burden on Plymouth residents.

As with many other communities, Plymouth is facing an affordability crisis. Over half of our renters (51.4%) and nearly one-third (30.8%) of our homeowners are considered cost-burdened by their housing. These numbers increase significantly when applied to those age 60 and older, a demographic which represents over a third of Plymouth residents.

But unlike many other communities, this crisis if not the result of failure or refusal to create more housing. To the contrary, Plymouth continues to be the fastest growing Town in the Commonwealth. This continuing population influx has increased housing costs, threatened our sole source aquifer, and created a greater need for municipal services and infrastructure beyond that which can be supported by our tax base.

The Plymouth Land Bank proposes to address these issues through a single transfer fee on the sale of higher cost and second homes, as well as income generating properties. I understand that such funding methodology may be disfavored by some. However, it is the only one that can be fairly apportioned to address the issues that population growth is creating in Plymouth.

An increase in property taxes on the residents and businesses of Plymouth would disproportionately impact those already facing affordability challenges; those who are

barely able to afford the rising costs of living or operating. The result of such a tax increase would be to drive out those people and businesses, necessitating further tax increases on those who remain to make up the shortfall which again would force out those unable to pay the increases – an “affordability spiral”. In contrast, the proposed Plymouth Land Bank transfer fee would only apply to those able to afford it, could be adjusted as to both its applicability and amount to reflect economic conditions, and would be subject to numerous exceptions included in the legislation intended to encourage smart growth.

The Plymouth Land Bank proposal would give Plymouth the opportunity to address its most critical needs without exacerbating growing affordability challenges. Given the current fiscal conditions, this need is greater than ever. For these reasons, I urge you to advance this proposal out of your committee and advocate for its passage by the Legislature.

Thank you for your consideration.

Steven J. Bolotin
Chair, Plymouth Planning Board