

October XX, 2021

To: Senate President Karen E. Spilka
House Speaker Ronald Mariano,
Chair Michael Rodrigues
Chair Aaron Michlewitz
Members of the MAGIC legislative delegation

Re: ARPA Funds

We, the undersigned communities of the MAGIC subregion*, write to urge the Commonwealth to use its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in a manner that complements local ARPA spending, making progress toward existing municipal planning efforts, and advances equity. We encourage the Legislature to consider the following principles when determining how best to use the Commonwealth's share of ARPA dollars:

- 1) **The Legislature should invest funds in a manner that advances local housing, transportation, climate, and economic development goals as identified in local plans.** Our communities have worked hard to produce a number of master plans, housing production plans, climate action plans, corridor studies, and other data-driven planning documents. These efforts extensively document on the ground trends, and typically entail thorough community engagement processes. Additionally, we come together as a subregion each month and discuss opportunities for regional collaboration to achieve these goals. ARPA funds can help move this work into the implementation phase.
- 2) **The Legislature should invest ARPA dollars to grow successful state programs like Complete Streets, Green Communities, Housing Choices, the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program, and other similar programs.** Municipal staff already know how to make use of funding available through these programs, and this familiarity means dollars can be spent expeditiously. Furthermore, for several of these programs, funding is contingent on completing an extensive local planning process. Cities and towns already have documented local needs and know the most effective uses for these funds.
- 3) **The state should assume direct COVID mitigation costs.** Cities and towns are currently working hard to put ARPA dollars to good use in creative ways that will have a long-term positive impact on our communities. Direct costs such as PPE procurement, vaccination site set-up and administration, air quality measures in schools, and technology for virtual and hybrid municipal meetings should be borne by the state.

- Every municipality was asked to plan for local vaccination sites before the state refocused efforts on large-scale sites such as Gillette. Towns in our MAGIC region, such as Carlisle, have not been reimbursed for all the costs they incurred, straining municipal budgets.
- Using state funds to address air quality in schools (equipment modifications and/or increased operating costs) would immediately improve the baseline health of all our students and faculty in a way the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) program cannot address on its own. This would free up MSBA dollars for other urgent facilities needs across the Commonwealth.
- Cities and towns need the ability to use the funds for long-term investments in public health such as social services and town nursing staff. These services are vital for communities of all sizes and of all demographics.
- ARPA gives our communities the ability to contemplate one-time investments in infrastructure such as water or sewage treatment that would allow us to address the need for low- and mid-range housing development.

For these reasons, we ask you to use state ARPA funds in a manner that will allow communities to unleash creative thinking on the local level.

Respectfully,

*Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Communication (MAGIC) is a subregion of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and is comprised of the towns of: Acton, Bedford, Bolton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Hudson, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Stow, and Sudbury.