

DOWNTOWN VITALITY ACT

An Act to Promote Downtown Vitality

Sponsored by Sen. John Cronin and Rep. Tony Cabral

LANDSCAPE


Small business districts in communities across the commonwealth need vibrant, walkable areas to attract enough foot traffic to succeed in today's challenging commercial environment. Online retail in particular has siphoned dollars away from local economies, contributing to economic and cultural displacement. An Act to promote downtown vitality (H.228/S.130) would reinvest 5% of remote retailer tax revenue back into our main streets and downtowns, helping to level the playing field by promoting district management and creating strong local places.


Massachusetts has the foundation for success with historic areas, urban squares, town centers, and rural villages. We have lacked the governance and financing structures necessary to manage these places for 15-hour districts, 7 days a week - and that is changing. A burgeoning network of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) has emerged over the last five years and we have established dozens of Cultural Districts. Parking Benefit Districts represent a new management tool and innovative public-private-civic partnerships have arisen. However, the state is still missing a funding mechanism to scale up this local innovation and create a system of management capacity on the sublocal or district level.


ABOUT THE DOWNTOWN VITALITY ACT

An Act to promote downtown vitality would establish the Downtown Vitality Fund and allocate 5% of receipts from online sales originating in Massachusetts to support staffing and operations of cultural districts, business improvement districts, main street associations, and parking benefit districts in Gateway Cities and other low-income communities. The Downtown Vitality Act would transform our state into a national leader and ensure that our communities, large and small, have a thriving, beating heart. We can do this in a way that values and strengthens our state's diversity, builds entrepreneurship among immigrants and communities of color, and enhances our unique cultural business districts.

WANT TO SHARE YOUR SUPPORT?

 Endorse the Downtown Vitality Act and join our advocacy coalition:
<https://bit.ly/DowntownACT>

 Contact your state representative and state senator and ask them to co-sponsor the bill. You can find your elected officials at <https://bit.ly/MCLookUp>

 Send your elected officials a message encouraging them to co-sponsor the entire Creative Sector Agenda <https://bit.ly/CreativeSectorAgenda>



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THE ACT WOULD:

- Establish a Downtown Vitality Fund managed by the Executive Office of Economic Development and funded with 5% of remote retailers (online) sales tax revenue.
- The Fund would disburse grants to establish, sustain, or provide technical assistance to district management entities, including, but not limited to, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Cultural Districts, and Parking Benefit Districts. Grants must be match by local funding sources.
- The Fund would prioritize districts located in Gateway Cities and other low-income areas; expanding entrepreneurship opportunities among underrepresented communities; and strengthening cultural identity and preventing cultural displacement.
- Establishes a Downtown Vitality Board to advise the EOED on the fund and review its activities. Proposed members include: MassDevelopment, Mass Cultural Council, representatives from Business Improvement Districts and Cultural Districts, municipalities and underrepresented communities.
- Expands the permissible uses of funds raised through Parking Benefit Districts to include district management activities and operations.

ENDORSEMENTS:

MassINC	Downtown Taunton Foundation	New Bedford Whaling Museum
MASSCreative	Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District	Playful Engineers
Mass Cultural Council	Fall River Arts and Culture Coalition (FRACC)	Serious Play Theatre Ensemble
MA Association of Business Improvement Districts	Greater Lawrence Fellowship of the Arts	Servedwell Hospitality
Abstraction Music Group LLC	Holyoke Art Inc.	Springfield Business Improvement District
Arts League of Lowell	Hub Theatre Company of Boston	Springfield Cultural Partnership
Bellforge Arts Center	LTCI	Tzedeck.com
Blues to Green	MultiArts	Van Gogh's Gear
Cabot Performing Arts Center	New Bedford Art Museum	Watefront Historic Area
Creative Collective LLC		LeagueE, Inc. (WHALE)
Cultural Center of Cape Cod, Inc.		YMCA Southcoast
		Your Theatre/Steeple Playhouse

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