

June 16, 2015

Chairman Paul Schmid
Joint Committee on
Environment, Natural
Resources & Agriculture
State House, Room 473F
Boston, MA 02133

Chairwoman Anne Gobi
Joint Committee on
Environment, Natural
Resources & Agriculture
State House, Room 513
Boston, MA 02133

MASSACHUSETTS
MARINE TRADES
ASSOCIATION



RE: **SUPPORT** for HB 638: An Act expanding pleasure boat access to Boston Harbor.

Dear Chairwoman Gobi and Chairman Schmid and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 638: An Act expanding pleasure boat access to Boston Harbor. On behalf of the Massachusetts Marine Trades Association (MMTA) we urge you to **support** this bill.

Established in 1964, the MMTA is the non-profit, statewide, representative body for over 1,200 marine trades businesses in the Commonwealth including boatyards, boat builders, marinas, boat dealers, retailers, repairers and marine industry professionals. Collectively our businesses contribute over \$2.0 billion in economic activity annually Massachusetts. Our purpose is to provide the framework for furthering the interests of the marine trades and the boating public through the promotion of boating, participation in legislation and professional improvement programs.

On behalf of the full MMTA membership and the 186,000 registered and documented boaters in Massachusetts, I am writing to express our support for House Bill 676, An Act Expanding Pleasure Boat Access to Boston Harbor. HB 676 would direct municipal and state public agencies controlling property within the City of Boston to establish mooring and docking facilities to expand public access to Boston Harbor.

With over 1500 miles of saltwater coastline, no body of water is more crucial to the Massachusetts economy than Boston Harbor. Improving public recreational boating access would help support regional economic stability and promote the Commonwealth's rich maritime history manifest in Boston Harbor and the Islands. An accessible Boston Harbor contributes to the overall quality of life enjoyed in Massachusetts that attracts tourists from around the world.

With only 35,000 slips and moorings statewide available to accommodate over 186,000 boats averaging 21 feet in length, even the existing supply is threatened by non-water dependent development on our waterfronts. These developments most often include very few individual slips in favor of accommodating fewer but larger vessels. These trends in coastal development – catering to fewer but larger vessels – hinders public access to Boston Harbor and the viability of those water dependent businesses that support the public and recreational boaters.

Boating gives families without the resources to purchase waterfront property the opportunity to exercise their public trust rights and enjoy the Massachusetts coast and harbors. While doing so, Massachusetts boaters and those transiting through our waters substantially invest in their destination ports by patronizing shops, restaurants, retailers, fuel sellers and often hotels and resorts. The Boston Harbor communities are dependent upon the annual financial boost boaters bring to their local economies.

MMTA supports state or municipal owners of waterfront property reporting to the Legislature about how best to enhance recreational boating opportunities and access. We understand requiring implementation involves budget discussions, but the reporting process is an excellent beginning to appreciating the real economic and recreational opportunities inherent in expanding public access.

The recreational marine industry contributes positively and significantly to the economic strength and quality of life enjoyed in Massachusetts. The ‘business of boating’ provides jobs, economic opportunity, public access to our precious waterways, improves aesthetics of inland and coastal waters and supports environmental stewardship while promoting a family-friendly form of recreation and tourism. With 186,000 state and federally registered vessels and 1 million anglers in the Commonwealth and over 5 million residents living within 10 miles of the ocean, any negative impact on the stability of the marine trades (economic, regulatory or others) has the potential to negatively affect millions of citizens and visitors.

The Association and its 300 member firms also seek to stem the exodus of recreational boating businesses from the Commonwealth and the loss of waters-edge usage for recreational boating purposes. The Association acts as a source of information about recreational boating and boating businesses for the general public, via its website at www.BoatMA.com; for the Massachusetts Legislature, where the Association is a frequent participant in public hearings and in the 50-member Legislative Boating Caucus; and for executive branch agencies, the MA Federal delegation and authorities with regulatory and economic development responsibilities.

On behalf of the entire membership of the Massachusetts Marine Trades Association, thank you for your service and your consideration of our **support of HB 638**. Please do not hesitate to call on us should the committee wish to request additional information on this bill or on the business of boating in Massachusetts. MMTA is always available to discuss this and any other legislation. Please contact Jamy Buchanan Madeja, Esq., MMTA's Legal and Government Relations Counsel.

Respectfully Submitted,

Toby Burr, President, Massachusetts Marine Trades Association

cc: Representative Tackey Chan
Representative Susan Gifford, Co-Chairwoman, Legislative Boating Caucus
Representative William Straus, Co-Chairman, Legislative Boating Caucus
Senator Anthony W. Petrucci, Co-Chairman, Legislative Boating Caucus
Senator Robert Hedlund, Co-Chairman, Legislative Boating Caucus