

# Governor Maura Healey Spearheads New Housing Laws for the Commonwealth

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A new Massachusetts law, effective August 1, 2025, has clarified the fees that a landlord may charge a prospective tenant. The changes to the law will likely have particularly significant effects on young renters and buyers in the state of Massachusetts.

The law adds new language to Massachusetts law, G.L. c. 112, § 87D1/2, stating that any fee imposed by a real estate broker must be paid by the party who initially engaged in the contract with the broker (Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, 2025).

According to Massachusetts General Law Section 87PP, a real estate broker is defined as any individual who engages in activities such as selling, exchanging, purchasing, or renting property for another person in exchange for a fee or commission (Massachusetts General Court, n.d.).

The new legislation also stipulates that brokers may legally only charge first and last month's rent, a security deposit, and the cost of changing a lock at the beginning of a new tenancy (Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, 2025).

Before August 1, landlords could shift the cost of consulting with a broker to the tenant, forcing them to pay thousands of dollars for a service they did not initiate (Graf, 2025). These costs have made it particularly difficult for low and middle-income families, young people, and the elderly to secure housing (Graf, 2025). Now, both a tenant and landlord may engage in business with a broker, but legally cannot shift the cost of such business to another party.

The elimination of broker fees is representative of Governor Maura Healey's greater efforts to foster a more equal and affordable housing market across the Commonwealth. In 2024, Healey signed the Affordable Homes Act, pouring \$5 billion into the expansion of affordable housing units, the rehabilitation of homes, and nearly 50 new policy initiatives (Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, 2025). In a 2025 press release, Healey

assures that the broker fee legislation is “one of just many ways that our administration is working every day to lower the high cost of living in Massachusetts” (Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, 2025).

These recent shifts in housing laws will likely have monumental effects on the renting experience for students in and around Amherst. With over 14,000 students living on campus across 51 residential halls, around 18,000 UMass students are left to find housing on their own (University of Massachusetts Amherst, n.d.).

The Amherst housing crisis can lead to students signing predatory or illegal leases, or paying thousands of dollars in fees before even moving in. Such legislation protects college students across the state, breaking down the inherent power imbalance between experienced lessor and inexperienced lessee.