Cambridge Housing Authority

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Cambridge Housing Authority Appoints Clara Fraden as Chief Executive Officer and First Woman to Lead the Agency

Clara Fraden, Longtime CHA Leader and Cambridge Resident, to Assume Role on March 30

Cambridge, MA – The Board of Commissioners of the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) voted unanimously to appoint Clara Fraden as the agency's Chief Executive Officer (CEO). CHA is charged with providing deeply affordable housing and housing subsidies to over 13,500 individuals in and around Cambridge. Fraden will become the first woman to lead CHA as chief administrator. Her appointment will take effect on March 30, 2026.

"The CHA Board of Commissioners is excited to announce CHA's new CEO," said CHA Board Chairperson Elaine DeRosa. "Ms. Fraden brings more than a decade of community development and organizational leadership experience. She has a deep understanding of Cambridge and our communities, a passion for identifying new housing opportunities, and respect for the people the housing authority serves. We know Ms. Fraden will lead CHA's affordable housing initiatives with excellence and care."

In accepting the appointment, Fraden said, "Housing is a human right and the foundation of a strong community. CHA is a national leader, proof of what the public sector can achieve with sustained investment, strong infrastructure, and deeply committed residents and staff. I am grateful to Mike and my predecessors, colleagues, residents and neighbors, and many city, state, and federal partners for the foundation they've built. I look forward to building on that work to preserve, strengthen, and grow communities where everyone can thrive."

Fraden, who has a Master's degree in Urban Planning from the Harvard Graduate School of Design, has spent the past eight years at CHA in roles of increasing responsibility. As a Project Manager, she led efforts to preserve and create more than 1,200 homes across Cambridge. Most recently, Fraden served as Director of Planning, where she guided a multidisciplinary team advancing a redevelopment pipeline exceeding $1 billion throughout Massachusetts.

As CEO, Fraden brings a deep commitment to resident-centered leadership and public accountability, with a collaborative approach that has earned trust among residents, staff, and public and private partners at all levels. Her work pairs large-scale public housing redevelopment with initiatives that strengthen resident stability and well-being. During her tenure at CHA, she has spearheaded health and housing efforts, including expanding access to fresh, healthy food, embedding healthcare professionals onsite, and leading CHA's expansion into permanent supportive housing.

"Clara makes herself available, listens intently, and works tirelessly to find the most impactful way to serve residents' needs," said Kenny Correia, a Cambridge firefighter and registered nurse at Cambridge Health Alliance, who has partnered with CHA to improve healthcare access for residents. "Clara is an effective leader who truly cares. She brings out the best in everyone."

Fraden is also a Cambridge resident and a mother, bringing both professional expertise and a personal connection to the residents CHA serves.

Jean Hannon, a CHA resident and member of the Alliance of Cambridge Tenants, spoke at the board meeting confirming Fraden's appointment: "I thank the commissioners for the time and energy everyone has put into this search process, and for selecting such a talented and energetic individual as CEO. I'd also like to let Clara know how grateful I am that she's decided to pursue this role. I'm looking forward to working with her."

Fraden will succeed Executive Director Michael J. Johnston, who is retiring after 34 years of dedicated service to CHA, including more than nine years as Executive Director. "I am happy to see the Board has appointed someone whom I know will work hard to continue the foundation and successes created by those who sat in the seat before me and the incredible CHA workforce," said Johnston.

The Board of Commissioners expressed deep gratitude to Johnston for his steady and exceptional leadership, his commitment to residents and staff, and the strong institutional foundation he leaves behind. CHA thanks the Board of Commissioners for leading a thoughtful and inclusive search process, as well as the staff and residents whose input helped inform this important decision.

About the Cambridge Housing Authority:
CHA's mission is to produce, support, and sustain safe, high-quality, and affordable homes for low-income individuals and families. CHA is committed to building communities with access to enriched services and opportunities that promote upward mobility, educational advancement, and civic engagement. CHA provides deeply affordable housing and housing subsidies to over 13,500 individuals — more than 9,500 of whom live in Cambridge, representing roughly 8% of the city's population.

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