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November 21, 2023

via email: [barbara.farina@mass.gov](mailto:barbara.farina@mass.gov)

Mr. Brian Arrigo, Commissioner  
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 6620  
Boston, MA 02114

Attn: Barbara Farina

Re: Castle Island Restroom Design

Dear Ms. Farina,

Boston Harbor Now respectfully submits the following comments on the *Castle Island Restroom Improvements Feasibility Study* presented by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Our organization attended last year's public meeting about this project and recently attended the virtual meeting on November 14, 2023. We remain excited to see the bathroom facilities thoughtfully expanded at this site.

As longtime stewards of the Boston Harborwalk, Boston Harbor Now is committed to ensuring the waterfront we build today is designed for a more resilient and inclusive future. We use the term "Harborwalk 2.0" to capture the aspirations of this work to ensure the waterfront is accessible and welcoming, is prepared for the coastal impacts of climate change, and centers equity and inclusion in the development of its design, construction, and programming. We appreciate that the proposed restroom improvements and new building are being proposed to make this signature waterfront park more inclusive and have taken sea level rise and coastal storms into account.

Castle Island is notably one of the most diverse and welcoming parts of the waterfront with visitors who reflect the diversity of the Commonwealth across age, income, race, and ability. The proposed restroom improvements and new building at Castle Island will expand on this legacy and provide a model of Boston Harbor Now's Harborwalk 2.0. Providing enhanced restroom facilities to support the park and its visitors will only make this vibrant and historic coastal park part of a more inclusive space. The plan for the two buildings and their strategic locations are enthusiastically supported by Boston Harbor Now.

*Creating a Welcoming Waterfront*

Supportive visitor amenities, like these new restrooms, are critical to creating a welcoming waterfront. Based on feedback we have collected around the Harborwalk and out on the Boston Harbor Islands, the



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availability of public restrooms is a primary factor in determining whether families are able to visit a space for a meaningful amount of time.

Restrooms in parks are especially vital for those with certain medical conditions. The availability of a heated year-round restroom proximate to the park entrance, public parking, and Sullivan's will help make Castle Island more equitable and accessible.

The inclusion of family restrooms in both buildings is also an important addition for enabling caregivers with young children. If the remaining areas remain gender segregated, we recommend adding language to the family toilet facilities clearly stating, "This restroom may be used by anyone regardless of gender." We also suggest all signs include iconography and be translated into additional languages to accommodate the multilingual populations spending time in the park.

#### *Climate Preparedness*

We wish to commend DCR on the thoughtful location of the facilities relative to climate risks along with proactive measures to passively dry proof the building at a lower elevation. Plans for responding to storms with more thorough maintenance and repairs will make the project even more resilient. We also appreciate that the buildings will be net zero and incorporate solar panels, thereby eliminating their carbon footprint and modeling sustainability for visitors to the park.

As the final designs for these restroom facilities are developed, we hope that equity, inclusivity, and climate resilience continue to be prioritized. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this project and look forward to remaining engaged through future phases of design and construction. We would be happy to speak with you further, if there are additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine F. Abbott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Katherine F. Abbott  
President and CEO  
Boston Harbor Now