



July 13, 2015

Honorable Linda Dorcena Forry, Senate Chair and Honorable Kevin Honan, House Chair  
State House – Room 410 and Room 38  
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Opposition to Sex Offender Legislation H1117 and H1119

Dear Chairwoman Forry and Chairman Honan:

I am writing on behalf of the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness to express our opposition to H1117 that would prohibit sex offenders from residing in public housing and H1119 that would prohibit sex offenders from residing in public housing hotels and motels. Both of these proposals would not only fail to increase public safety but would significantly undermine it.

Evidence has clearly demonstrated that housing stability for an individual with a sex offense history markedly reduces the potential for re-offense. Housing promotes public safety on multiple levels: it provides an environment to receive support services to positively reintegrate into the community and it provides the community the best means to monitor their progress.

Over the last several years, the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness' Committee to House People with Sex Offense Histories has convened to address the lack of housing available to individuals who have been convicted of sexual offenses. We have identified the State's outdated leveling system as a significant barrier to housing as the level assigned to individuals frequently does not correspond to the risk they actually present. The Network has presented before the Special Commission to Reduce Sex Offender Recidivism to advocate for necessary reform. Until that reform happens, banning sex offenders from housing based on their "level" has little correlation to public safety advancement.

The Special Commission to Reduce Sex Offender Recidivism is in the process of examining these issues and will issue its recommendations by the end of the calendar year. We urge the legislature to await any further action regarding this population until it can receive the benefit of the Commission's work and promote policies that would best achieve the desired goal of promoting public safety.

I would be happy to talk more. Thank you for your consideration.

Best,  
Pamela

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