



Your Take-Away Action Items

- **Submit written testimony in support of MA ID bill**
 - See template letter below
- **Sign on as a supporter of Right to Counsel:** www.massrtc.org
- **Sign on as a supporter of HOMES:** www.passthehomesact.org
- **Join the Network blog to stay connected:** <http://westernmasshousingfirst.org>
- **Stay tuned on the FY21 Budget debate on housing priorities and revenue options – your voice will be critical!**

Sample Testimony in support of MA ID Bill

October XX, 2019

Senator Joseph Boncore, Senate Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
State House, Room 112

Representative William Straus, House Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
State House, Room 134

RE: Testimony in support of An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families (Senate Bill 2043/House Bill 3066)

Dear Chair Boncore and Chair Straus:

I am pleased to submit this testimony on behalf of [insert your org] in support of An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families (Senate Bill 2043/House Bill 3066).

[Insert paragraph: your org mission statement and how it relates to your knowledge of this need]

[Insert your and/or your org's own data/experience that makes this bill critical to removing a barrier, e.g.:] The current barriers to obtaining a Massachusetts identification (MA ID) card contribute to ongoing homelessness in Western Massachusetts and beyond. The MA ID is a linchpin to employment, education, financial services and more, all of which impact the ability to obtain and maintain housing. It is in the Commonwealth's interest to support a pathway to housing and employment stability, and this bill is a critical component on that path.

[insert closing, e.g.] We urge you to favorably report out the Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families, and to make it the law of this Commonwealth.

Best,
Your signature

Sample City Council Resolution in Support of Right to Counsel and Homes Bill

CITY OF NORTHAMPTON MASSACHUSETTS

In the City Council, July 11, 2019

Upon the Recommendation of Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra and Councilor William H. Dwight
R-19.XXX

Resolution in Support of Right to Counsel in Eviction Cases and
Eviction Sealing to Promote Housing Opportunity and Mobility

WHEREAS: Over 40,000 households in Massachusetts were served with eviction notices in 2018; and
WHEREAS: Community Legal Aid represents and advises Northampton residents about their eviction cases, but the need is far greater than the funding for Community Legal Aid's services; and
WHEREAS: Many tenants are unaware of their rights and legal protections both in and out of the courtroom; and
WHEREAS: Overall over 92% of Commonwealth tenants received no legal guidance once an eviction notice was delivered, nor assistance from an attorney in defending the eviction in court; and **WHEREAS:** Access to critical legal resources, guidance and support from a legal advocate prior to an eviction proceeding can protect people from being displaced by an eviction, prevent homelessness, and create a path to housing stability; and
WHEREAS: The following 'Right to Counsel' bills have been refiled for the 2019-20 Legislative Session and assigned to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary for hearing on July 16, 2019: S.913 by Senator Sal N. DiDomenico and H.3456 by Representative Chynah Tyler, both titled 'An Act to ensure right to counsel in eviction proceedings,' and H.1537 'An Act establishing a right to counsel in certain eviction cases' filed by Representatives David M. Rogers and Michael S. Day; and **WHEREAS:** Since 1988, over 1 million such eviction cases have been filed in Massachusetts and once filed become part of that tenant's eviction record, documenting the tenant's history of ever having sued or been sued by a landlord; and
WHEREAS: Regardless of fault, outcome, or underlying basis for a court filing, possessing any record of an eviction filing can affect a tenant's ability to secure housing and may give a landlord reason to reject their application; and
WHEREAS: In 2013, the Massachusetts Trial Court began placing eviction record information online, making a tenant's court record history easily accessible to the public and to tenant screening companies, which routinely recommend rejections of tenants for having been in court, regardless of the outcome of the case or proof of clerical error; and
WHEREAS: Even children and minors named in eviction proceedings risk permanent records that impact their search for housing when they become adults; and
WHEREAS: Many landlords routinely file a notice to quit simply as a matter of course at the conclusion of a tenancy, and are unaware of the collateral consequences of eviction records or of the growing record of evictions they themselves are accumulating; and
WHEREAS: Bills H.3566 and S.824 'promoting housing opportunity and mobility through eviction sealing (HOMES),' sponsored by Representative Michael Moran and Senator Joseph Boncore respectively have been assigned to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary for hearing on July 16, 2019; and
WHEREAS: These bills would protect tenants from being unfairly branded with an eviction record by sealing records until a judgment is rendered and ensuring the accuracy of records while not altering the legal rights of landlords, property owners or tenants.
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Northampton City Council hereby states its support of the right to counsel for tenants in eviction proceedings, and joins our state legislators Senator Jo Comerford and Representative Lindsay Sabadosa, who are co-sponsors, in supporting the acts establishing and ensuring those rights: S.913, H.3456 and H.1537. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Northampton City Council also hereby supports with co-sponsors Senator Jo Comerford and Representative Lindsay Sabadosa, S.824 and H.3566, the acts to promote housing opportunity and mobility through eviction sealing. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Administrative Assistant to the City Council shall cause a copy of this resolution to be sent to the state sponsors of the 'Acts to ensure right to counsel in eviction proceedings,' ...