

STATE POLICY AS A FORCE FOR ENDING HOMELESSNESS

How Our Communities Can Organize for Change

Franklin County Resource Network Legislative Breakfast

Presentation by Pamela Schwartz

October 18, 2019

WHY HOUSING?

“Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everyone in this country. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart.”

Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*

WHAT IS THE NETWORK

The Network creates collaborative solutions across Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire Counties to prevent and end homelessness through a Housing First approach that makes homelessness *rare, brief and non-recurring*.

It provides:

- Coordinated advocacy on state budget and policy priorities
- Coordinated responses to state and federal funding opportunities
- Trainings on current policies and best practices
- Annual regional gatherings to review impact and exchange resources

HOW THE NETWORK WORKS

Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness

Leadership Council

60+ members, including elected officials, state agency leaders and partners across every sector

Steering Committee

Regularly convening committees:

Families

Individuals

Young Adults

Veterans

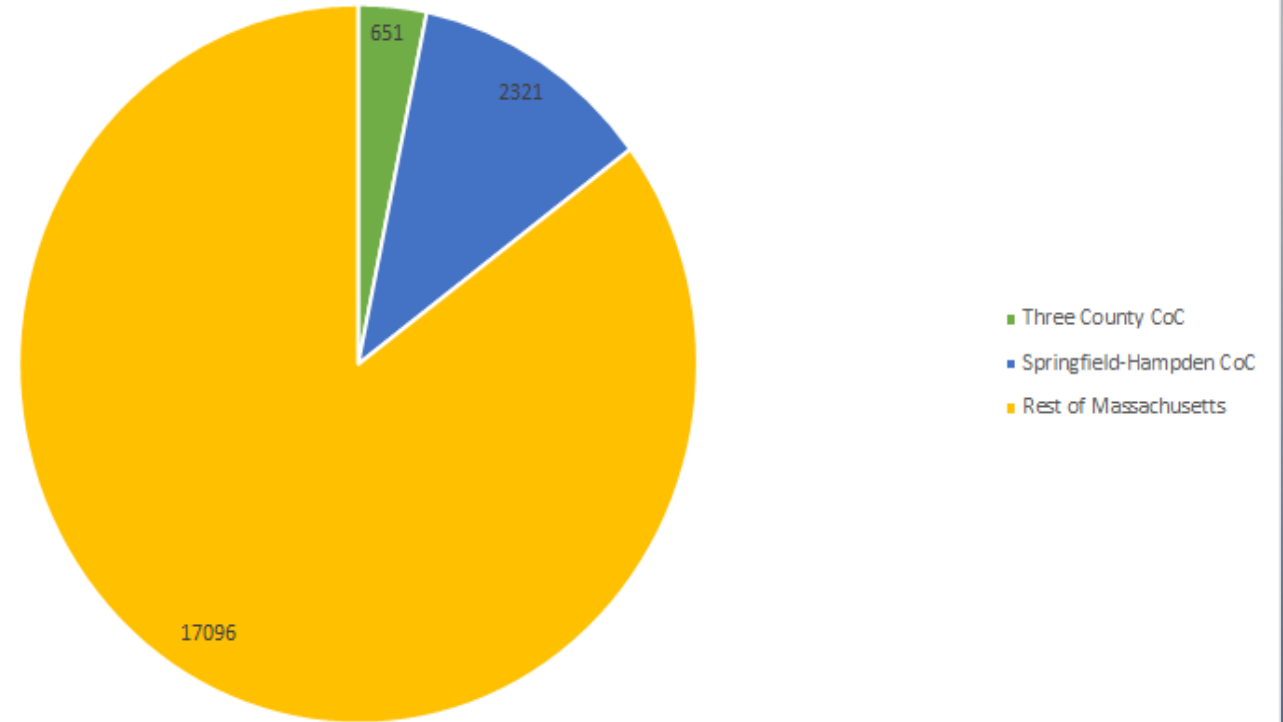
Career Services

Email Pamela Schwartz at pschwartz@westernmasshousingfirst.org to get connected;

go to <http://westernmasshousingfirst.org> to subscribe to our blog.

20,068 PEOPLE IN
MASSACHUSETTS
WERE COUNTED
AS EXPERIENCING
HOMELESSNESS
IN 2018

Homelessness in Massachusetts - 2018 Point in Time Count



Franklin, Hampshire, Berkshire, and Hampden Counties accounts for approximately 17% of the statewide population of people experiencing homelessness

FRANKLIN COUNTY AT A GLANCE

Total population: 70,963 people

Median rent, 2013 – 2017: \$899

Median Household income (in 2017 dollars),
2013 – 2017: \$57,307

Per capita income over 12 months (in 2017
dollars), 2013 – 2017: \$33,010

Persons living in poverty: 10.4%

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IN FRANKLIN COUNTY



- Total renter households: 9,539
- ~25% of total rental households are living with extremely low incomes (ELI)
- Households of people living in the ELI range that are rent burdened: 79%
- Households of people living in the ELI range that are severely rent burdened: 60%
- There are approximately **42 available and affordable units for every 100 households in the extremely low-income range**

RAISING REVENUE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- **Local Option Transfer Fee Enabling Legislation** for affordable housing
 - Thank you Senator Comerford for lead sponsorship!
- **Doubling the Deeds Excise Tax** (raising \$350 million in revenue; still lower than CT, NY, VT and NH – it hasn't been raised in 50 years!)
 - 40% for climate resiliency
 - 40% for affordable housing
 - 20% for the Community Preservation Act Trust Fund
 - Also enables towns to add a local option

RIGHT NOW: MASS ID BILL

An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families

Senate Bill 2043 and House Bill 3066

Mass ID is critical for employment, education, financial accounts...and stable housing.

What this bill would do: establish a fee waiver process and create alternative residency documentation.

THANKS to Legislative Co-Sponsors:

Senator Jo Comerford, Rep. Natalie Blais and Rep. Paul Mark

WEIGH IN WITH THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE NEXT WEEK!

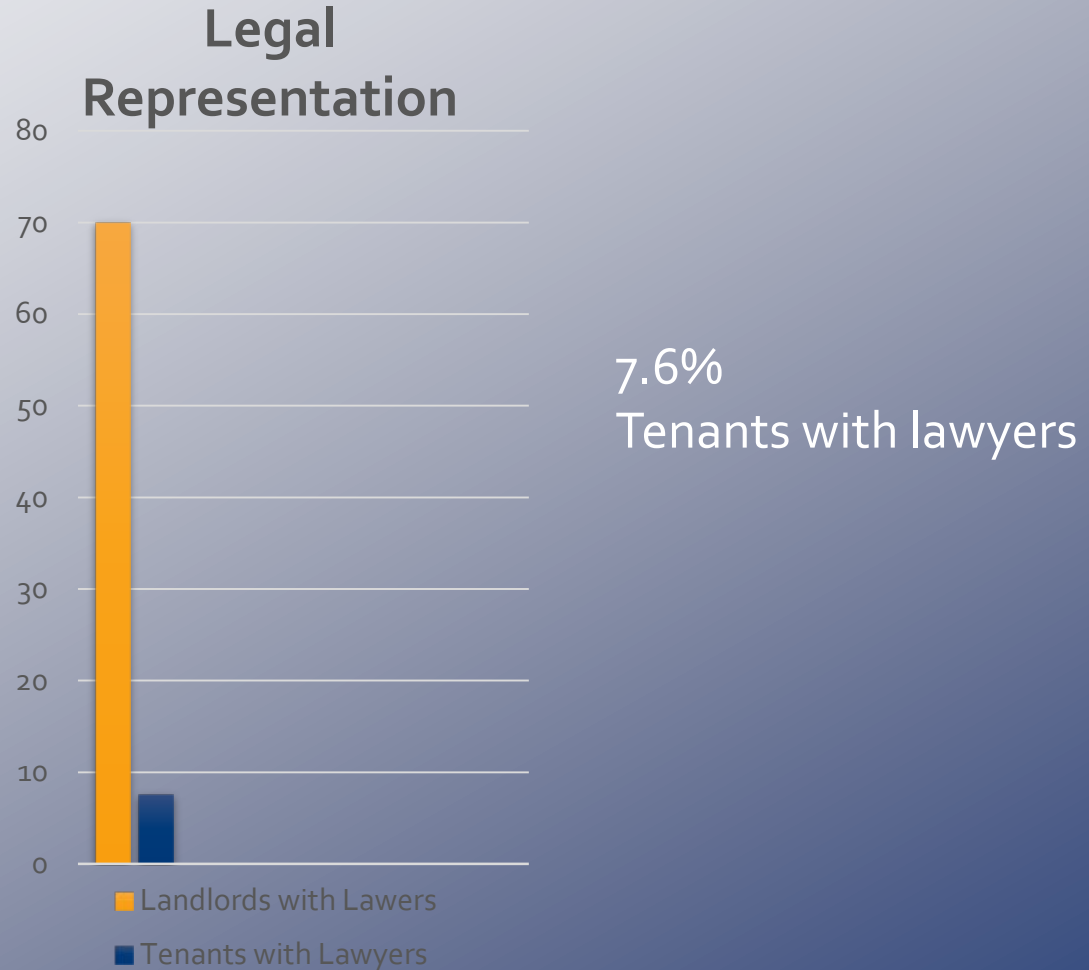
RIGHT TO COUNSEL FOR TENANTS

Over 92% of tenants facing eviction are unrepresented.

70%
Landlords with lawyers

Over the past 10 years, on average nearly 40,000 eviction cases have been filed each year in MA.

Legal representation prevents homelessness.



RIGHT TO COUNSEL BILLS

Senate 913, House 3451, House 1537... Support a Right to Counsel in evictions that brings together the best of all bills and provides a continuum of legal assistance and access to housing stability.

THANKS to Legislative Co-sponsors:

Senator Jo Comerford, Rep. Natalie Blais, Rep. Paul Mark

What you can do now:

Sign on your organization: www.massrtc.org

HOMES BILL- EVICTION SEALING

The urgency:

- Since 1988 over 1 million eviction cases have been filed in Massachusetts
- Eviction records are publicly available forever, regardless of outcome of the case
- The outcome of a case should matter (even *winning* hurts tenants)
- Children are listed on eviction complaints, following them into adulthood and complicating their ability to obtain housing, credit and a job

HOMES BILLS

Senate Bill 824 & House Bill 3566: An Act promoting housing opportunity and mobility through eviction sealing (HOMES) would:

- Seal all eviction cases as soon as they are filed and while they pending, until and unless an allegation is proven.
- Seal no-fault evictions and other types of housing cases, such as when tenants are seeking to get repairs made.
- Make non-payment and fault eviction cases publicly available when there is a judgment against the tenant on the merits, or there is an agreement for judgment and the tenant has actually been evicted.
- Seal all eviction records after 3 years and provide a process to seal records for good cause before the 3-year point.

THANKS to our Legislative Co-sponsors: Senator Comerford, Senator Hinds, Rep. Blais, Rep. Mark

JOIN THE COALITION: www.passthehomesact.org

GREENFIELD: PASS A RESOLUTION!

Municipal leadership plays a critical role in making state policy change happen. Greenfield City Council can join the cities of Northampton, Springfield and other Eastern MA communities to pass a Resolution urging the Legislature to adopt Right to Counsel and HOMES bills. **It will make a meaningful difference!**



Senator Comerford and Representative Sabadosa deliver a resolution from the Northampton City Council

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Be counted as a community!

Be counted as an organization!

Greenfield City Council: **Pass a resolution** in support of Right to Counsel and HOMES Bills

Organizations:

- **Submit written testimony** in support of MA ID bill
- **Sign on as a supporter** of Right to Counsel and HOMES Bills - www.massrtc.org; 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!