



# State budget and policy making

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How it works and  
why it matters  
to ending homelessness

January 28, 2020

Western Massachusetts Network  
to End Homelessness

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# Agenda



9:45 - Welcome, Introductions and Overview

10:00 - Power Mapping Exercise

10:20 - How the Budget Gets Made

10:25 - How Laws Get Made

10:50 – **Break**

11:05 - How to Engage Legislators

11:20 - Quick Tips on Calling Legislators: Exercise

11:40 - Closing and Evaluation

12 noon - Enjoy the rest of your day!

**You are a tenant or a former tenant**

**You work in**

housing, shelter, homeless prevention

health care

domestic violence intervention

veterans services

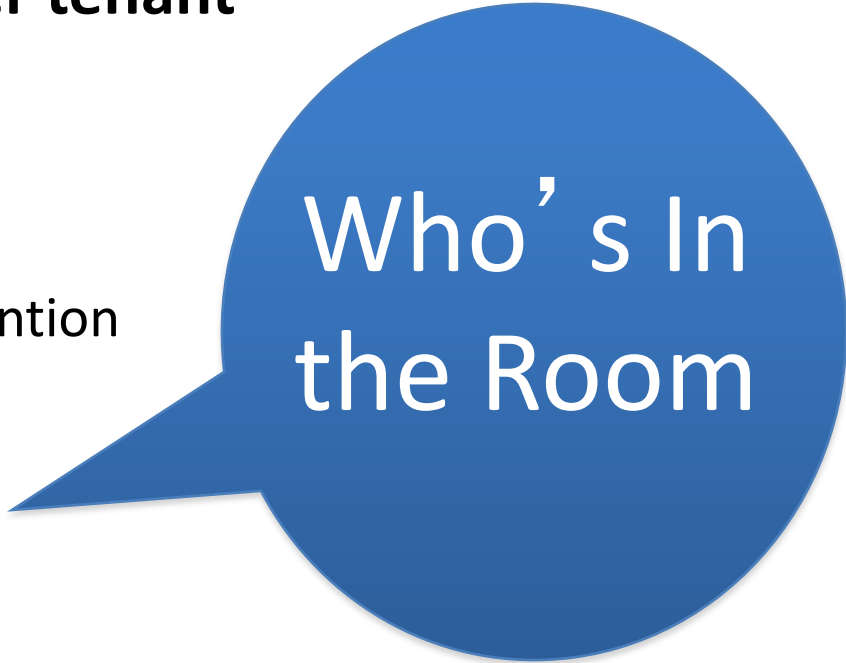
education

workforce development

law or business

government

community organization



Who's In  
the Room

TRUTH, JUSTICE, LIBERTY, AND  
HUMANITY WILL ULTIMATELY PREVAIL  
FREDERICK DOUGLASS

# Who Represents You?

160 Elected Representatives in the House

40 Elected Senators in the Senate

1 Elected Governor

# Power Mapping



- Power maps are useful visual tools to see
  - who has power
  - who can influence those with power
  - what connections we can make in the room

- Map the Western Mass Delegation
  - list your name on all the Senators and Representatives where you live and/or work

## The Budget

Each year, the Legislature and the Governor pass one very large **budget bill** that pays for state programs

Many housing and homelessness programs are funded in the budget including shelters, rental assistance, tenancy preservation, public housing, affordable housing development, and more

# Where does the budget start?

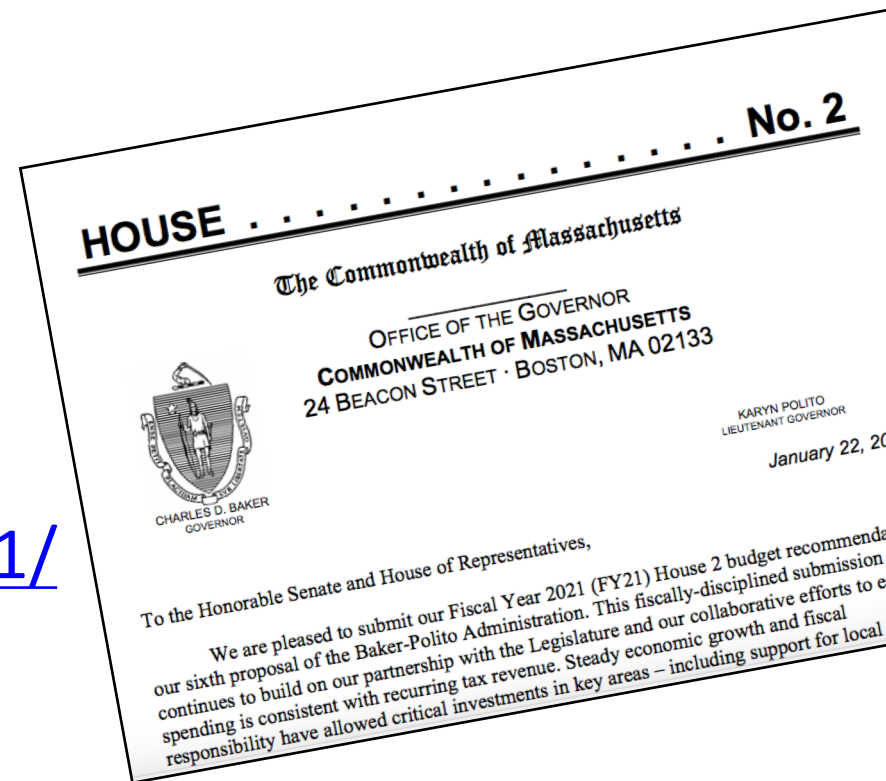
Budget process starts with state agencies giving their budget requests to the Governor in the fall

Governor reviews and gives a **proposed** budget to the Legislature in January



# Last Week Governor Released Proposed State Budget

- Budget is for Fiscal Year 2021 starts on July 1, 2020 and runs through June 30, 2021
- To find the Governor's budget documents go to:
  - <https://budget.digital.mass.gov/govbudget/fy21/>
- What happened?





# The House & the Budget

- Governor's **proposed** budget first goes to the House Ways & Means Committee
- House Ways & Means reports out its **proposed** budget to the full House of Representatives in mid-April
- House debates, amends, and passes **proposed House budget**



# The Senate & the Budget

- After the House has finished its budget, it's the Senate's turn
- Senate Ways & Means Committee reports out its **proposed** budget to the full Senate in late May
- Senate debates, amends, and passes **proposed Senate budget**



# Reconciling the Two Budgets



- The House & Senate budgets are usually different
- A budget Conference Committee is appointed to work out the differences
- Conference Committee is 3 Senators and 3 Representatives
- After Conference Committee agrees on one budget and both House and Senate approve it, budget goes to the Governor

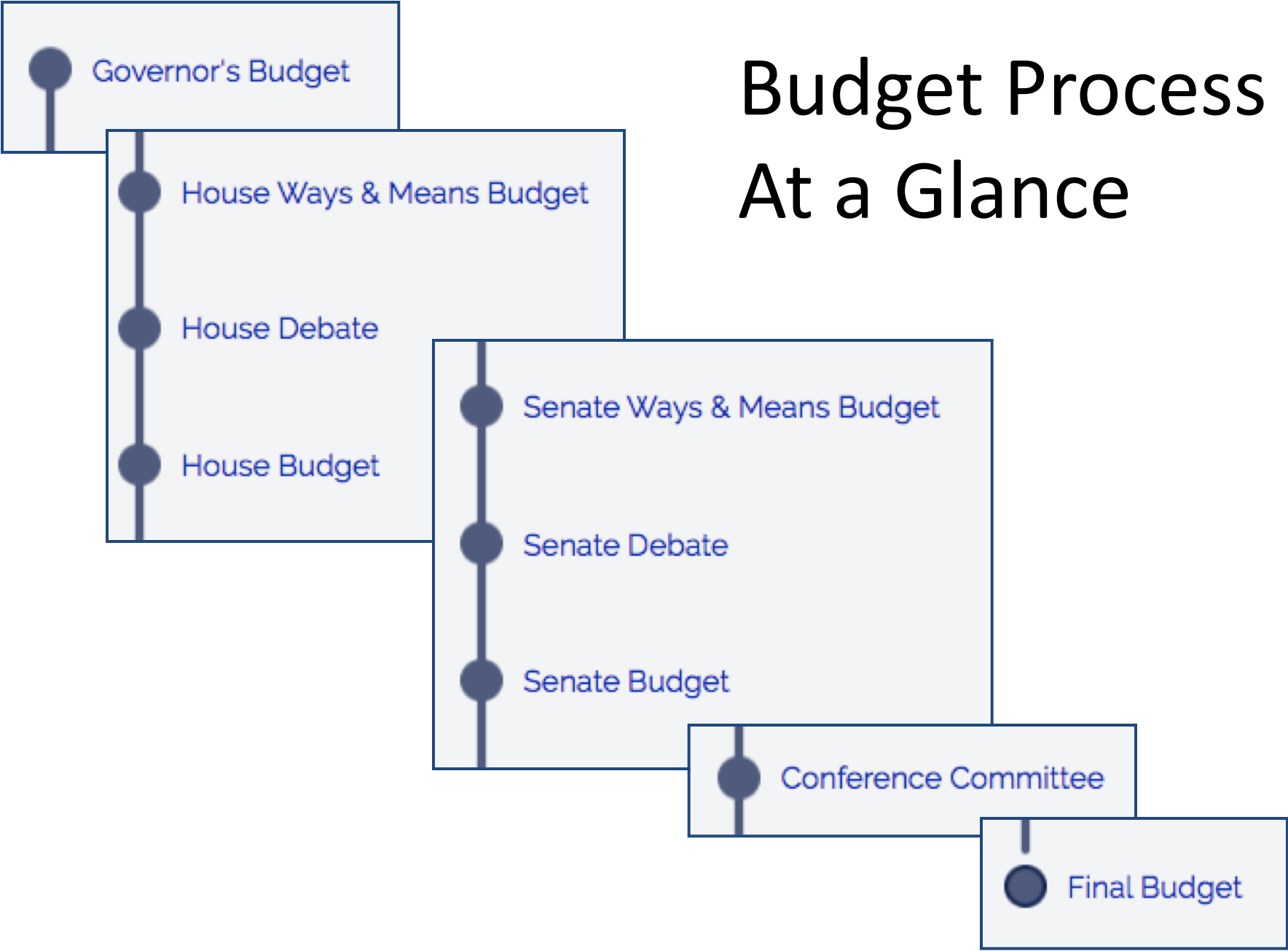


# The Governor & Final Budget

- The Governor has 10 days to review the budget and can use his or her veto power to decrease (but not increase) the amount of funding for any agency or program
- The Legislature can restore the funding that the Governor has vetoed by a two-thirds vote in both the House and Senate
- Then we have a final budget



# Budget Process At a Glance



# Two-Year Lawmaking Process

- Unlike the budget bill, which happens every year, bills are on a 2-year schedule
- Bills change the law or create new laws and programs
- Bill process starts on odd-numbered years
- Currently we are in the 2019-20 Legislative Session

# Filing a Bill

- Legislators file bills by a deadline in January of odd year
- Representatives file House bills, Senators file Senate bills
- Each bill has a lead sponsor then there are co-sponsors
- Co-sponsors have deadlines by which they can sign on

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 526 FILED ON: 1/14/2019

**SENATE . . . . . No. 824**

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

*Joseph A. Boncore*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3615 FILED ON: 1/18/2019

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 3566**

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

*Michael J. Moran*

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act promoting housing opportunity and mobility through eviction sealing (HOMES).

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Michael J. Moran</i>	<i>18th Suffolk</i>
<i>Councilor Lydia Edwards</i>	<i>District 1, City of Boston</i>
<i>Mike Connolly</i>	<i>26th Middlesex</i>
<i>Jack Patrick Lewis</i>	<i>7th Middlesex</i>
<i>Denise Provost</i>	<i>27th Middlesex</i>
<i>Jason M. Lewis</i>	<i>Fifth Middlesex</i>
<i>Lindsay N. Sabadosa</i>	<i>1st Hampshire</i>
<i>Tricia Farley-Bouvier</i>	<i>3rd Berkshire</i>
<i>Christine P. Barber</i>	<i>34th Middlesex</i>
<i>Kenneth I. Gordon</i>	<i>21st Middlesex</i>
<i>Maria Duaine Robinson</i>	<i>6th Middlesex</i>
<i>Tram T. Nguyen</i>	<i>18th Essex</i>
<i>Tommy Vitolo</i>	<i>15th Norfolk</i>
<i>Elizabeth A. Malia</i>	<i>11th Suffolk</i>
<i>David M. Rogers</i>	<i>24th Middlesex</i>
<i>Adrian C. Madaro</i>	<i>1st Suffolk</i>

# Bills Assigned to a Committee

- Each bill is assigned to a Joint Committee
- 27 Joint Committees on different subjects
- Joint Committees have a Senate Chair and a House Chair
- Joint Committees have both House and Senate members, typically 11 House members & 6 Senate members

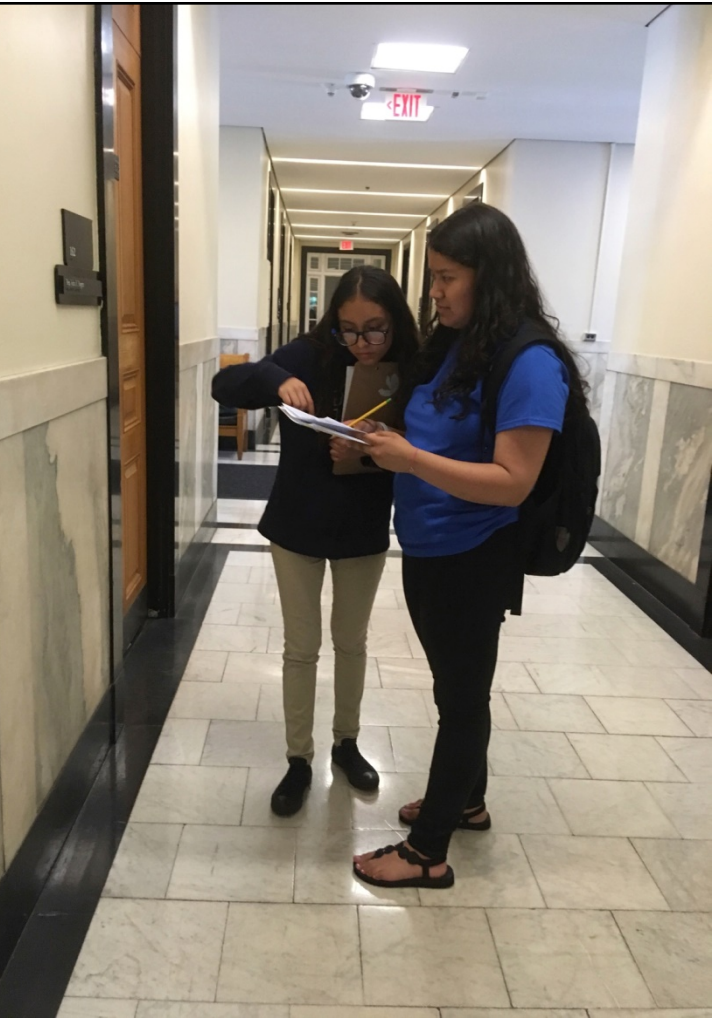


# Public Hearings

- Joint Committees hold public hearings on bills where legislators and the public testify
- Committees then review bills and issue recommendations whether to:
  - Give a **favorable report** and advance a bill in the legislative process, which may include changes to the bill or
  - Give an **unfavorable report** or a **study order** and not advance a bill
- Joint Committees must report bills out by early February of 2<sup>nd</sup> year or give bills an extension



# Many Steps



- Bill that receive favorable report moves through other Committees in the chamber where they were filed
- Then to the full House or Senate
- If bill passes the House it goes to the Senate for approval and vice versa
- Bill approved by both the House and Senate then goes to the Governor
- Many many many steps

# The Governor

- The Governor has 10 days to decide whether to sign a bill into law or to veto (not pass) it
- If the Governor vetoes a bill, Legislature can override Governor's veto by a 2/3ds vote in both the House and Senate
- Bill then becomes law

# Formal v. Informal

- The two-year lawmaking process ends its **formal session** on July 31 of the even years
- The legislature goes into **informal session** until the end of the year
- Sometimes bills can pass during the informal session

On July 31, 2020 the formal session ends

# Tale of Two Bills (So Far)

## **Right to Counsel in Evictions Bill**

- 3 different bills
- 4 lead sponsors
- 63 co-sponsors

## **HOMES Act Eviction Record Sealing Bill**

- 2 identical bills
- 2 lead sponsors
- 62 co-sponsors

# Why Right to Counsel

**92%**  
**of tenants**

facing eviction in Massachusetts  
**do not have access to legal  
counsel or representation**

**40,000**  
**evictions**

annual average filed over the past  
**10 years** in Massachusetts

*Since NYC passed Right to Counsel legislation in 2017:*

**84%**  
**of tenants**

with full legal representation have  
**remained in their homes**

**5x faster**  
**drop**

**in eviction filings** in areas where  
representation was provided than  
other areas of NYC

# Right to Counsel Bill

November 2019, RTC Coalition submits proposed bill to Judiciary Committee which provides:

- Legal representation to low-income tenants facing an eviction and low-income owner-occupants of 1 or 2-family homes seeking possession of their own and only home
- The bill calls for building the capacity of existing organizations to prevent evictions and homelessness and promote housing stability, including proactive education and outreach, housing stabilization assistance, and “upstream” support before court.

# Why Eviction Record Sealing

- Since 1988 over 1 million eviction cases have been filed in Massachusetts
- Vulnerable people are at risk of eviction
- Children are listed on eviction complaints
- Eviction records are publicly available forever regardless of the outcome of the case
- The outcome of a case should matter





# HOMES Eviction Record Sealing Bill

- Seal all eviction cases while pending until allegation is proven
- Seal no-fault evictions and other types of cases, such as when tenants are trying to get repairs made
- Seal eviction records after 3 years and provide a process to seal records for good cause before 3 years
- Unseal non-payment and fault eviction when there is a judgment against the tenant on the merits, or there is an agreement for judgment and a constable evicts a tenants.
- Make it illegal to name minors or others not responsible for the rent as a defendant in an eviction case

# Status of RTC & HOMES



On July 16, 2019, the Judiciary Committee held a hearing on both RTC and HOMES

Judiciary Committee currently considering bills

Feb 5, 2020 is the deadline for the bills to be reported out unless an extension is granted

# Ways to Engage Legislators

- Ask legislators to sponsor a bill and be its champion
- Ask legislators to co-sponsor a bill and work to get it passed
- Ask legislators to testify on a bill



- Ask legislators to vote and take action on a bill

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

# Your Experience

Legislators want to learn about what peoples' experiences, especially if you experience a problem first hand

- Tell Legislators about your personal experience
- Give Legislators local data



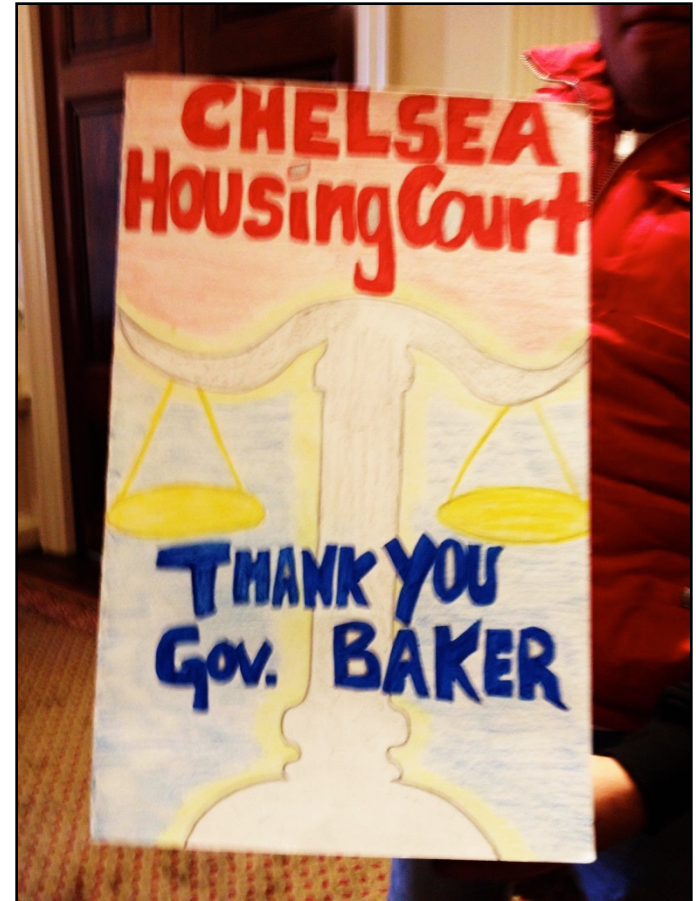
# Communicate

- Keep communicating with legislators throughout the process so that they know you care
  - Ask to meet with them in their District
  - Send them your written testimony
  - Invite them to meetings
  - Call them
  - Email
  - Come to the State House



# Keep Engaging

- Develop a relationship with legislators and their staff
- Work together as a group
- Thank elected officials for their work and let them know you are watching the process



# Thank You for Your Work

As of today there are:

- 116 organizations supporting Right to Counsel
- 65 organizations supporting the HOMES bill
- Over 50 organizations and individuals testified or submitted testimony in support of Right to Counsel and or the HOMES bill
- 6 cities and towns have passed resolutions

# The Network's Legislative Priorities



- Right to Counsel
- HOMES (eviction record sealing)
- MA ID to provide access to ID for youth and families experiencing homelessness
- Real Estate Transfer Fee Local Option for Affordable Housing
- Bill of Rights for People Experiencing Homelessness



Join the Network Blog  
for updates and action alerts

[www.westernmasshousingfirst.org](http://www.westernmasshousingfirst.org)

