



Legislative Priorities to Prevent and End Homelessness 2021–2022

The Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness is committed to undoing the structural racism that underlies housing instability and homelessness. Recent studies reveal the stark challenge: **Black tenants are twice as likely** as white tenants to face eviction, despite making up only 11% of Massachusetts' population and Black women in particular are 2.5 times more likely than white women to face eviction.¹ In addition, Black women are far more likely to have their name attached to an eviction record.² Between the start of the pandemic and the implementation of the eviction moratorium, **78% of evictions filed** in Boston—the area for which there is available data at this time—**were in neighborhoods of color.**³

The Network's priorities below, determined in collaboration with our statewide partners,⁴ provide a critical and urgent response to this crisis, preserving housing stability and creating housing opportunities for those who have been systematically denied.

COVID-19 Housing Equity: *An act to prevent COVID-19 evictions and foreclosures and promote an equitable housing recovery (S.891/H.1434) Lead sponsors: Senator Pat Jehlen, Representative Frank Moran, Representative Kevin Honan.*

Over 1,500 evictions have been filed in Western MA alone since the lifting of the state eviction moratorium in October, 2020. This bill builds upon the eviction protections passed in the FY20 budget, Chapter 257 of the Acts of 2020. It also closes loopholes in Federal protections which currently leave tenants and homeowners vulnerable, and ensures new federal rental assistance funds will reach those most in need. [Factsheet here.](#)

Right to Counsel in Evictions: *An Act promoting housing stability and homelessness prevention in Massachusetts (S.874/H.1436) Lead Sponsors: Senator DiDomenico, Representative David Rogers, Representative Michael Day*

Currently, over 90% of tenants are unrepresented when faced with the threat of eviction. Right to Counsel bills will prevent evictions and promote housing stability during the pandemic and over the long-term by providing legal representation for low-income tenants and low-income owner-occupants in eviction proceedings. [Factsheet here.](#)

Eviction Record Sealing: *An Act promoting housing opportunity & mobility through eviction sealing (HOMES) (S.921/H.1808) Lead sponsors: Senator Joe Boncore, Representative Mike Moran* An eviction record frequently creates a devastating barrier for tenants looking for housing. This bill will protect tenants from being unfairly branded with an eviction record if they don't have a judgment against them, if they weren't actually evicted or if they did nothing wrong. [Factsheet here.](#)

¹ <https://evictionlab.org/>

² <https://www.aclu.org/news/racial-justice/clearing-the-record-how-eviction-sealing-laws-can-advance-housing-access-forwomen-of-color/>

³ <https://www.bostonevictions.org/>

⁴ The Network coordinates advocacy with a broad range of statewide partners, including: Homes for All MA Coalition, MA Coalition for the Homeless, MA Law Reform Institute, MA Homes for Families, the Transfer Fee Coalition and CHAPA.

Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA), *An Act to guarantee a tenant's first right of refusal* [S890/H.1426](#) *Lead Sponsors: Senator Pat Jehlen, Representative Jay Livingstone, Representative Rob Consalvo*

TOPA passed both the House and Senate last session as part of the Economic Development Bill, only to be vetoed by Governor Baker. TOPA has been refiled this session with a few updates and improvements. [Factsheet here.](#)

Local Option Transfer Fee on Sales of High-End Homes to Build Affordable Housing: *An Act empowering cities and towns to impose a fee on certain real estate transactions to support affordable housing* ([S.868/H.1377](#))

Lead Sponsors: Senator Jo Comerford, Representative Mike Connolly

The lack of affordable housing is at the crux of the homelessness crisis. This bill allows cities and towns to choose to levy a local tax on the transfer of high-end houses, with the money generated put into that municipality's affordable housing trust fund. [Factsheet here.](#)

Strengthening MRVP: *An Act Relative to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program* ([S898/H1428](#)) *Lead Sponsors: Representative Adrian Madaro and Senator Joan Lovely*

Strengthens the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) by codifying the program and making improvements, including reducing the tenant's rent share from 40% to 30%.

Western MA Cliff Effect Pilot: *An Act concerning public assistance for working families and the creation of a pilot program to address the impacts of the cliff effect* ([S119/H208](#)) *Lead Sponsors: Senator Eric Lesser, Representative Patricia Duffy, Representative Carlos González.* [Factsheet here.](#)

Regional Transit: *An Act to increase regional transit accessibility in the Commonwealth* ([S2277/H3413](#)) *Lead Sponsors: Senator Harriette Chandler, Representative Natalie Blais*

For more detail on the bills below, please see the [MA Coalition for the Homeless Summary](#).

Improve access to the Emergency Assistance program (EA): *An Act improving emergency housing assistance for children and families experiencing homelessness* ([S.111/H.202](#)) *Lead Sponsors: Senator Adam Gomez, Representative Marjorie Decker, Representative Liz Maranda*

Permanently establish and improve RAFT: *An Act providing upstream homelessness prevention assistance to families, youth and adults* ([H.1385](#)) *Lead Sponsors: Representative Marjorie Decker, Representative Liz Miranda*

Establish HomeBASE in state statute and provide renewals: *An Act promoting housing stability for families by strengthening the HomeBASE program* ([H.1372](#)) *Lead Sponsor: Representative Christine Barber*

Ease access to standard MA ID cards: *An Act to provide identification to youth and adults experiencing homelessness* ([S.2276/H.3515](#)) *Lead Sponsors Senator Harriette Chandler, Representative Kay Khan, Representative Jim O'Day*

Bill of Rights: *An Act providing a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness* ([S.142/H.264](#)) *Lead Sponsors: Senator Becca Rausch, Representative Smitty Pignatelli, Representative Frank Moran*

Contact: Pamela Schwartz, Director

Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness

pschwartz@westernmasshousingfirst.org

413-219-5658