



June 3, 2021

Speaker of the House Ronald Mariano
Room 356
State House, Boston, MA 02133

Second Assistant Majority Leader Joseph Wagner
Room 234
State House, Boston, MA 02133

Re: In support of extending Chapter 257 and CDC eviction protections and passing the COVID-19 Housing Equity bill (S.891/H.1434).

Dear Speaker Mariano and Second Assistant Majority Leader Wagner:

I am writing on behalf of the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness (“Network”) to request your attention to the threat facing thousands of tenants across Western Massachusetts and the Commonwealth due to the end of the state of emergency on June 15 and the expiration of CDC protections on June 30.

We urge you to **extend Chapter 257 eviction protections, adapt and extend CDC protections in Massachusetts and pass the COVID-19 Housing Equity bill (S.891/H.1434)** to prevent the devastating consequences of more homelessness in Massachusetts. Even with the vital Chapter 257 protections, 16,000 evictions have been filed statewide and 3,000 executions for possession have been granted since the eviction moratorium ended in October, 2020. In **Western Massachusetts alone, 2,167 evictions have been filed and 137 executions granted.** At the same time, **452 homeowners** in Western Massachusetts currently facing the threat of foreclosure.

The precipitous end of Chapter 257 protections, in conjunction with the impending end of the CDC moratorium on June 30, would have dire consequences for increased housing instability and homelessness in our region.

Even before the pandemic,

- over 90% of tenants did not have representation while over 80% of landlords had attorneys. This disparity has increased during COVID.
- Tenants were defaulted in about 25% of cases as a result of a combination of factors, e.g., not receiving notice, not being able to access court, technological and language difficulties.
- Of all cases where judgments enter, **98% of them are entered for the landlords.**
- Court statistics fail to capture the informal evictions that happen at the Notice to Quit stage.

The pandemic has exacerbated this underlying crisis. Chapter 257 and the CDC protections are two critical components that must continue to preserve a modicum of housing stability, and the COVID-19 Housing Equity bill contains additional vital protections. See the [factsheet here](#).

The urgency of this moment is made all the more apparent when examined through a racial justice lens. Statewide, **over 60% of tenants who are behind on rent are people of color** and over 66% are low-income. Black people in Western Massachusetts experiencing homelessness are represented over 2.5 times higher than their percentage of the general population; for Hispanic/Latino their representation is three times higher. To address racial injustice in our housing policy requires these action steps to prevent evictions.

[The Network](#) is comprised of hundreds of partners across every sector in the four western counties working to prevent and end homelessness with a Housing First approach that centers racial equity. Together, we are joined in our urgent request to extend Chapter 257 and the CDC protections and adopt the COVID-19 Housing Equity bill (S. 891/H.1436).

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Best,

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