

A Call to Action:

Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness
5th Annual Regional Gathering

Friday, June 4, 2021

The Western MA Network to End Homelessness

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.

Get Connected: Visit <http://westernmasshousingfirst.org/> to follow our blog.



Marylou Sudders, MSW, ACSW
Secretary, Health and Human Services



Making Housing Justice Happen.

Marc Dones, Chief Executive Officer
King County Regional Homelessness Authority

Homelessness in Western MA.

Keleigh Pereira, Director

Three County Continuum of Care
Community Action Pioneer Valley

On January 27, 2021, the annual Point in Time Count showed at least

2,673

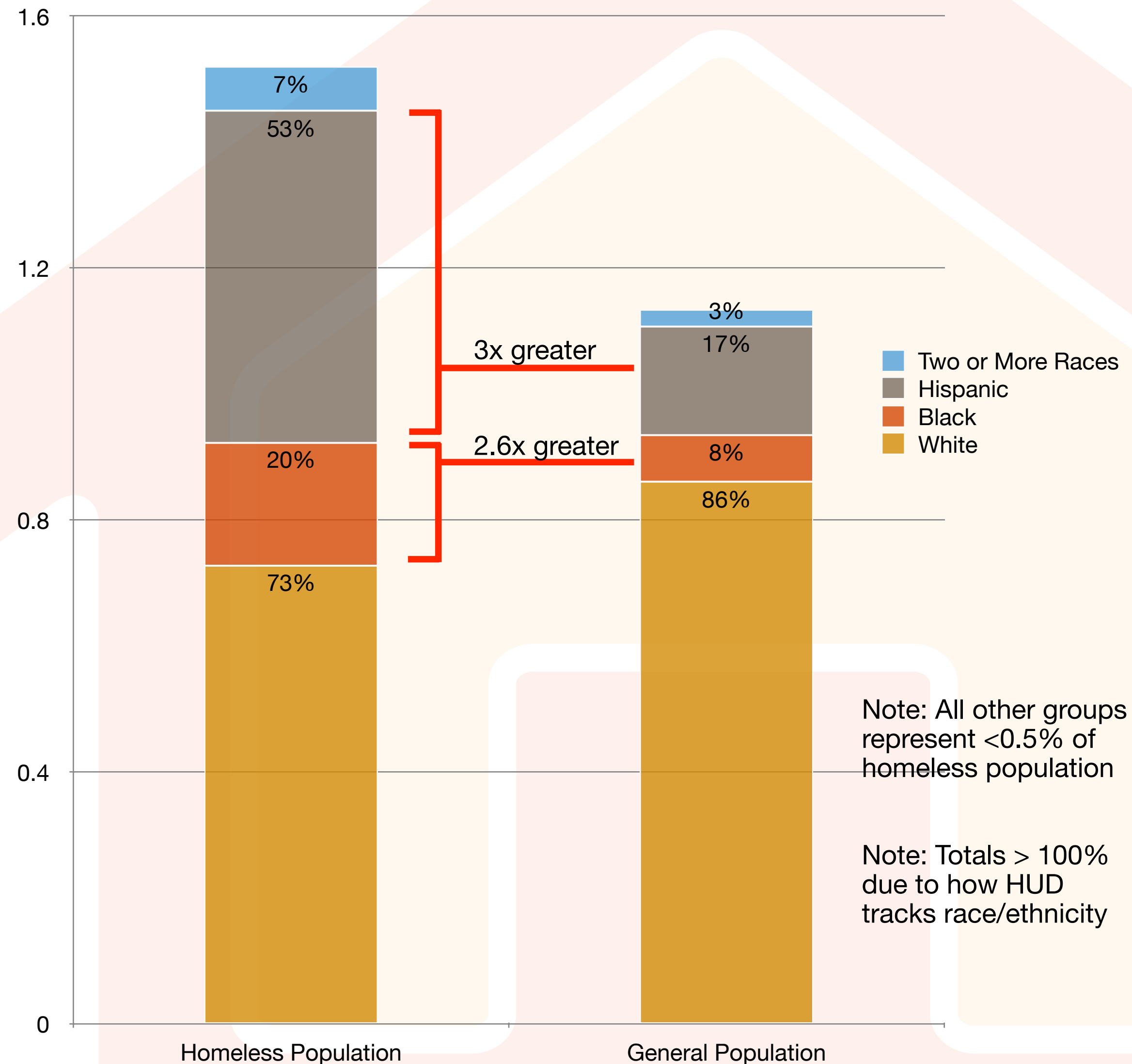
people experienced homelessness in our region.

- 767 individuals
- 1906 family members (parents and children)
- 67 young adults ages 18-24 years old

(Source: 2021 Point-in-Time Count)

People of color are disproportionately impacted.

Racial Disparities in Homelessness in Western MA



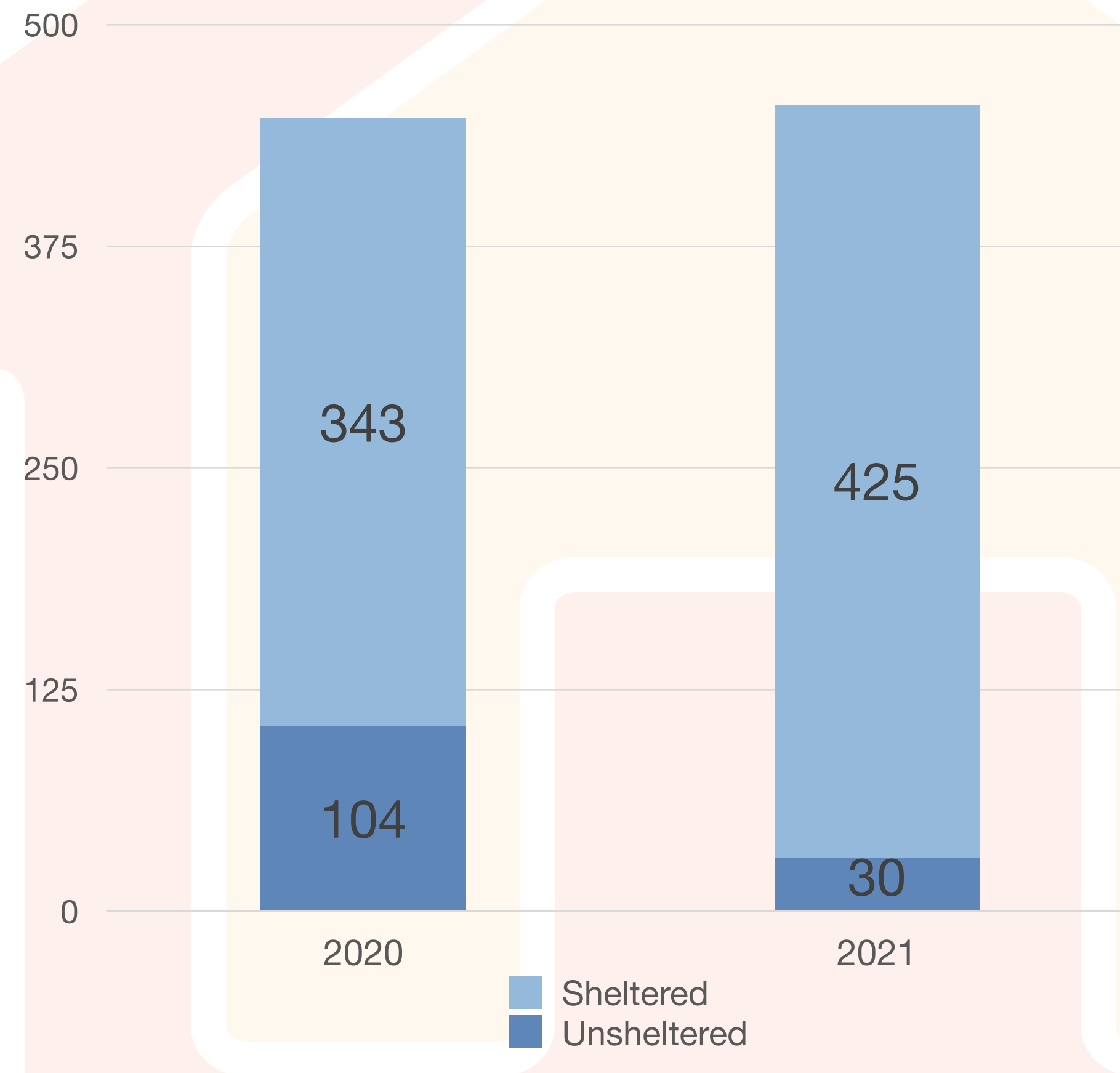
**Black homelessness =
2.6x greater than general
population #s**

**Hispanic/Latino
homelessness = 3x greater
than general population #s**

(Sources: 2021 Point-in-Time Count; US Census Bureau, 2019)

Use of Hotels for Individuals in Hampden County

Unsheltered Numbers Down



Rehousing Rates Up

Recorded exits to permanent housing destinations, from shelters serving individuals (7/1/20-5/28/21):

- Hotel (non-congregate) shelter: **37%** of total population
- Congregate shelter: **13%** of total population



The Eviction and Foreclosure Crisis.



COVID-19 and the economic fallout have exacerbated an eviction crisis:

16,000 new eviction cases have been filed in Massachusetts since the eviction moratorium ended in October 2020. **3,000 executions for possessions** have been granted.

In Western MA alone, the number of eviction filings for non-payment of rent total **2,167** for the four-county region since October. **137 executions for possession** have been granted.

452 properties in Western MA face the threat of foreclosure

Current protections in place ("Chapter 257" laws) that have prevented an even greater number of evictions will end on June 15 when the state of emergency lifts, **unless the state legislature acts immediately to:**

- 1. Extend Chapter 257**
- 2. Adopt and Extend CDC protections in Massachusetts**
- 3. Pass the COVID-19 Housing Equity Bill (S.891/H.1436)**

A large, stylized graphic of a house in the background. It consists of a light orange house shape with a white outline, set against a larger, semi-transparent light orange house shape. The entire graphic is enclosed in a thin orange border.

Alvina Brevard, Director

Division of Housing Stabilization, Massachusetts Department of
Housing and Community Development

- ✓ **The Commonwealth was able to increase shelter capacity within the four Western Ma counties from 273 shelter beds to 792 shelter beds for individuals, at its highest point. A nearly 300% increase.**
- ✓ Statewide pre-pandemic, there were a maximum of 2,989 shelter beds
At its peak during the pandemic, **there were 3,695 shelter beds for FEMA reimbursement**
- ✓ During the FY21 Point and Time count (PIT) unsheltered count reduced by an estimated 63%.
- ✓ DHCD stood up the Emergency Assistance Call Center February 2021, processing approximately 160 calls daily

Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI) launched in October 2020 to keep tenants and homeowners safely and stably housed, prevent COVID-19 related evictions and homelessness, and support landlords

- Emergency Housing Assistance (RAFT, ERMA, ERAP combined): Month of May exceeded all other months to date with state disbursing \$33.6M in assistance and serving 11,743 households
- FY21 to date: \$156.1M in total Emergency Housing Assistance has been disbursed to 26,539 households
- ERA spending rate: Between ERAP & SHERA, rate of federal spending is ~\$1M per day.
- At the current rate of spending, total ERA funds would last for about 18 months (December 2022); however, we anticipate an increase in spending rate as programs mature, moratoriums expire, and new policies are implemented

- ✓ DHCD will continue to explore the future of shelter by analyzing need & new capacity to chart a path to the future

- ✓ DHCD will continue to focus on housing:
 - ✓ Maintain tenancies with prevention funds- Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) and Rental Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)
 - ✓ Rapid rehousing with Rapid Transition for Individuals (RTI)
 - ✓ Emergency Solutions Grant – COVID (ESG-CV)
 - ✓ Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) rolling applications accepted

Racial Injustice in Homelessness.

Representative Bud Williams, Chair

Joint Committee on Racial Equity, Civil Rights and Inclusion

Racial Injustice in Homelessness

- Black tenants are twice as likely as white tenants to face eviction, despite making up only 11% of the Massachusetts population (<https://evictionlab.org>)

Poverty in the Pioneer Valley by Race and Ethnicity, 2018

38% Hispanic
23% Black
19% Asian
14% White

[Source: *American Community Survey*, 2014-18]

Racial Injustice in Homelessness

- Statewide, **over 60% of tenants who are behind on rent are people of color** and over 66% are low-income.
- The end of the eviction protections on June 15 is a racial equity issue.

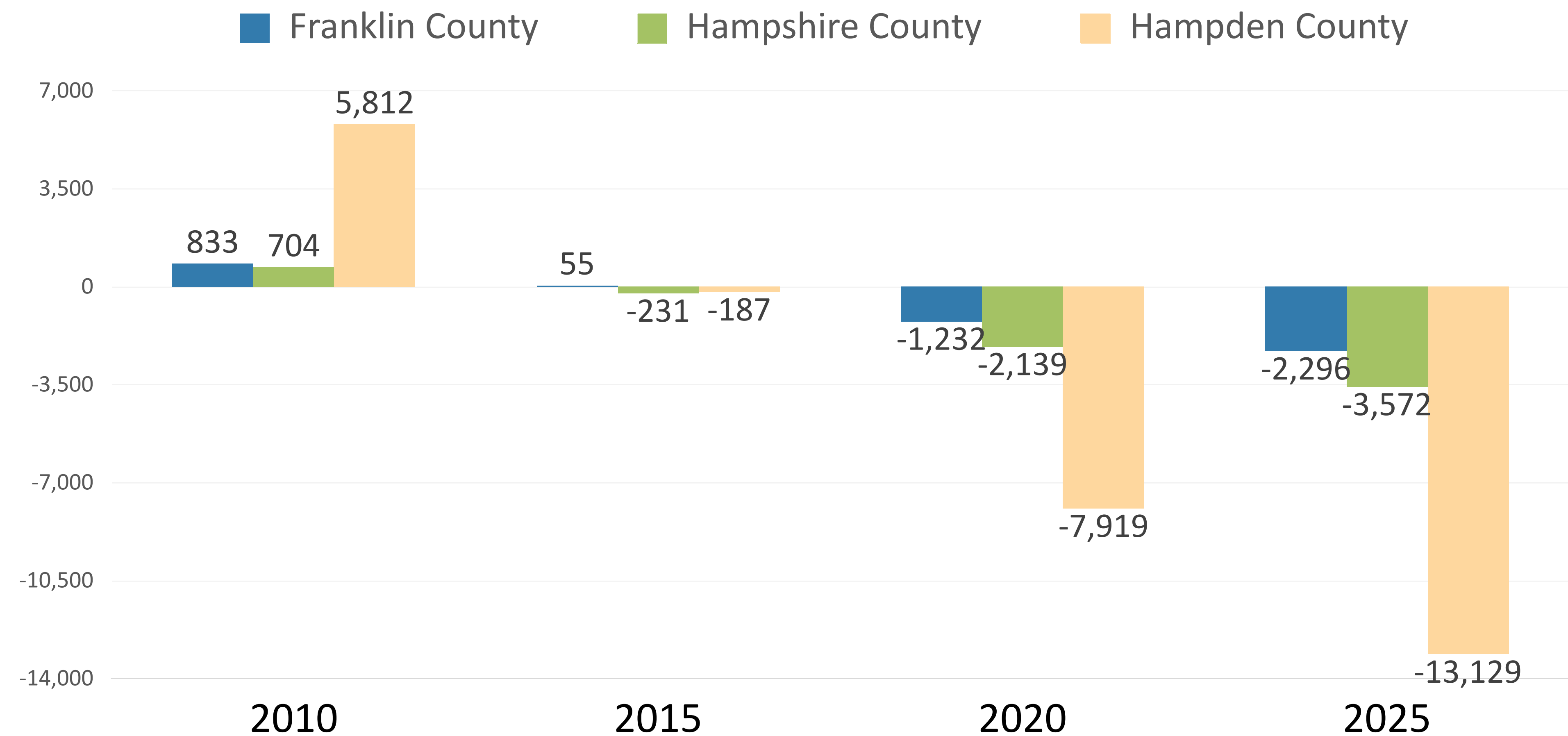
Source: <https://www.tableau.com/foundation/data-equity/economic-power/policylink-rent-debt>

The Housing Supply Gap.

Housing Opportunities.

Keith Fairey, President and CEO
Way Finders

Projected Housing Unit Gap



Source: UMDI Housing Unit Demand Projection based on UMDI Population Projection and ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates; UMDI Housing Unit Projection based on ACS 1-Year Estimates from 2010 to 2018.

A Time of Unprecedented Opportunity

The federal American Rescue Plan Act is providing Massachusetts with unprecedented resources to address homelessness and housing needs, including:

- 1,780 new Emergency Housing Vouchers (99 in Western MA alone); 887 still to be allocated via DHCD
- \$719 million in Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds
- \$126 million in HOME-ARP to meet the needs of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including through development of affordable housing, tenant-based rental assistance, supportive services, and acquisition and development of non-congregate shelter units for permanent affordable housing
- \$178.5 million Homeowner Assistance Fund to prevent mortgage delinquencies and defaults, foreclosures, loss of utilities or home energy services, and displacement of homeowners experiencing financial hardship

What we can do about our housing gap...

- *An Act Relative to Housing Production* (H.871/SH1448) *Lead Sponsors: Senator Crighton, Rep. Vargas and Rep. Honan.* Set statewide affordable housing production goals; Require multi-family zoning around public transportation or other suitable locations in all municipalities; Allow inclusionary zoning bylaws to be enacted with a simple majority vote; Allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to be built by-right in every municipality; Examine how underutilized commercial properties can be used for housing; Prioritize state-owned land for affordable housing
- Advocate for the inclusion of Housing in the American Jobs Plan: \$213 Billion proposed by Biden Administration

A large, stylized graphic of a house. It consists of a light orange outer shape and a yellow inner shape with a white outline. The house is positioned on the left side of the slide.

Earl Miller, Director of Recovery

MA Department of Mental Health

Safe Havens Housing

24/7 supervised and supported housing for people previously sleeping outdoors in need of intensive support as a bridge to permanent housing.

THANK YOU to our Western MA Legislators for championing an expansion of Safe Havens beds in the Western region.

Senate budget allocates \$1 million in new funds to the program statewide. Likely 7 new beds in Hampshire and Franklin Counties.

And it's just a start:

An Act to create and implement a Massachusetts Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool (H3838),
Lead Sponsor Rep. Joan Meschino
Subsidy Pool Program to address the complex needs of disabled men, women and children experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts

Rose Webster-Smith, Executive Director
Springfield No One Leaves
Western MA Organizer, Homes for All MA Coalition

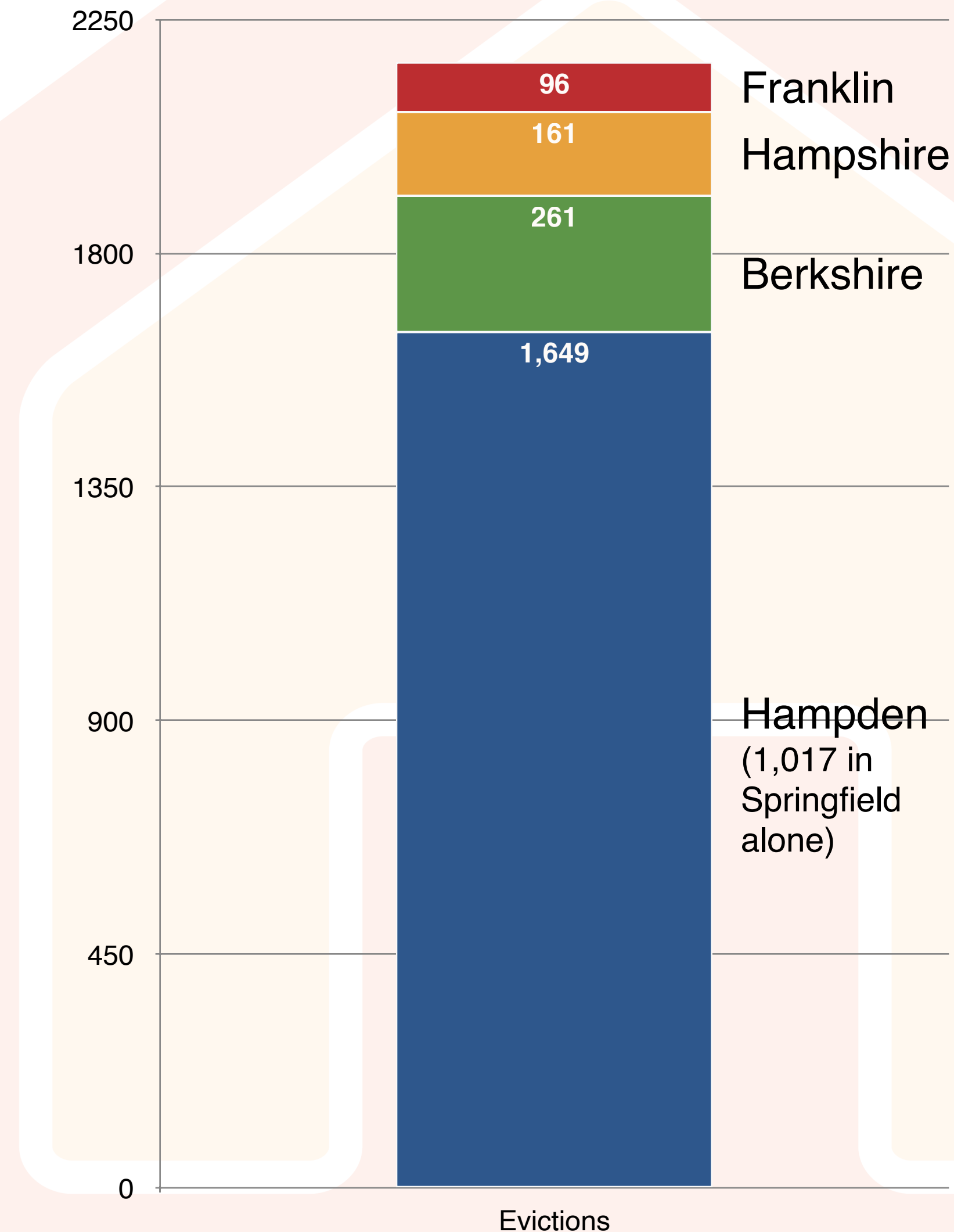
Housing Justice Priorities

- **COVID-19 Housing Equity** ([S.891/H.1434](#)) Lead Sponsors: Senator Pat Jehlen, Rep. Frank Moran, Rep. Kevin Honan
- **Right to Counsel in Evictions** ([S.874/H.1436](#)) Lead Sponsors: Senator Sal DiDomenico, Rep. David Rogers
 - Over 90% of tenants are unrepresented while over 80% of landlords have attorneys. Tenants default in 25% of cases due to multiple barriers. Of all cases where judgments are entered, 98% of them are entered for landlords.
- **Eviction Record Sealing: (HOMES)** ([S.921/H.1808](#)) Lead Sponsors: Senator Joe Boncore, Rep. Mike Moran
- **Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA)** ([S890/H.1426](#)) Lead Sponsors: Senator Pat Jehlen, Rep. Jay Livingston, Rep. Rob Consalvo

- **Local Option Transfer Fee on Sales of High-End Homes to Build Affordable Housing** ([S.868/H.1377](#)) Lead Sponsors: Senator Jo Comerford, Rep. Mike Connolly
- **Western MA Cliff Effect Pilot** ([S119/H208](#)) Lead Sponsors: Senator Eric Lesser, Rep. Patricia Duffy, Representative Carlos González
- **Improve access to the Emergency Assistance program (EA)** ([S.111/H.202](#)) Lead Sponsors Senator Adam Gomez, Representative Marjorie Decker, Rep. Liz Maranda
- **Strengthening MRVP (S.898/H.1428)** Lead Sponsors Senator Joan Lovely and Rep. Adrian Madaro
- **Bill of Rights:** An Act providing a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness ([S.142/H.264](#)) Lead Sponsors Senator Becca Rausch, Rep. Smitty Pignatelli, Rep. Frank Moran

More at <http://westernmasshousingfirst.org>

Western MA Evictions and Foreclosures since October 2020



Additionally:

- **137 Executions for Possession** (forcible removal allowed with 2-days' notice)
- **18 forced removals** by sheriff or constable
- **452 properties** face the threat of foreclosure



ACT NOW to prevent and end homelessness in our region!

- Extend "Chapter 257" protections
- Adopt and Extend CDC protections in Massachusetts
- Pass COVID-19 Housing Equity Bill (S. 891/H.1434)
- Advocate: The Legislature's Conference Committee is convening to reconcile differences between the Fiscal Year 2022 House and Senate budgets. Join the Network blog to stay in touch on action steps to advance our priorities: <http://westernmasshousingfirst.org>
- Join Springfield No One Leaves: email info@springfieldnooneleaves.org to get connected to the Western MA Homes for All campaign

Discussion

