



## **Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness Legislative Priorities 2023-2024**

The Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness seeks to prevent and end homelessness with a Housing First approach that centers racial equity. The Network is honored to represent western Massachusetts on statewide coalitions advocating for these legislative priorities and especially thanks CHAPA, Homes for All MA, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, and Massachusetts Law Reform Institute for their leadership. The Network is also pleased to partner with the Western MA Housing Coalition in our shared goal to make housing a reality for all in western Massachusetts. The Network's legislative priorities include:

### **[An Act promoting access to counsel and housing stability in Massachusetts \(HD.3657 & SD.1082\)](#)** *Sponsors: Rep. Dave Rogers; Sen. Sal DiDomenico*

Right now, 9 out of 10 tenants face eviction unrepresented. In contrast, most landlords are represented by counsel. This legislation would establish an Access to Counsel program to provide legal representation to eligible tenants and owner-occupants in eviction proceedings.

### **[An Act promoting housing opportunity and mobility through eviction sealing \(HOMES\) \(HD.3625 & SD.1592\)](#)** *Sponsors: Rep. Mike Moran; Sen. Lydia Edwards*

As soon as an eviction case is filed, a tenant has an eviction record, regardless of whether they did anything wrong or were even evicted. This legislation will protect tenants from being unfairly marked with an eviction record and allow access to stable and safe housing.

### **[An Act granting a local option for a real estate transfer fee to fund affordable housing \(HD.2857 & SD.1982\)](#)** *Sponsors: Rep. Mike Connolly; Sen. Jo Comerford*

A local option real estate transfer fee would be an effective, efficient and equitable tool for raising necessary revenue for affordable housing in communities across the Commonwealth. This legislation will allow municipalities to place a transfer fee on high end real estate sales and use this money to create affordable housing in their communities.

### **[An Act to guarantee first right of tenant's refusal \(TOPA\) \(HD 3645 & SD 2238\)](#)**

*Sponsors: Reps. Jay Livingstone and Rob Consalvo; and Sens. Pat Jehlen and Adam Gomez*

The Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) would allow cities and towns this local option to provide tenants in multi-family buildings the right to match a third-party offer when their homes are being sold. Tenants can designate their rights to a non-profit or local housing authority, or partner with an affordable housing purchaser. TOPA is revenue neutral, does not regulate sales prices, and explicitly exempts small owners.

**[An Act enabling cities and towns to stabilize rents and protect tenants \(HD. 3953 & SD.1818\)](#)** Sponsors: Reps. Dave Rogers, Samantha Montañó; Sens. Pat Jehlen and Adam Gomez  
This bill would repeal the ban on local rent control and enable municipalities to enact rent control and just cause ordinances.

**[An Act establishing a Massachusetts foreclosure prevention program \(HD1551 & SD923\)](#)**  
Sponsors: Rep. Christine Barber and Sen. Adam Gomez  
This bill would establish a statewide Foreclosure Prevention Program to require servicers and homeowners to participate in pre-foreclosure conferences to explore alternatives to foreclosure.

**[An Act to create and implement a Massachusetts flexible supportive housing subsidy pool program \(HD.216 & SD.674\)](#)** Sponsors: Rep. Joan Meschino; Sen. Brendan Crighton  
84% of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness who receive supportive services and a housing voucher remain housed one year later. This bill will bring to scale supportive housing programs by braiding public and private funding into a single, flexible source to meet the needs of vulnerable residents, ensuring equitable distribution of funds and creating housing stability across a continuum of services.

**[An Act codifying the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program \(HD.3349 & SD.682\)](#)**  
Sponsors: Rep. Adrian Madaro; Sen. Joan Lovely  
The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) is the largest state-funded rental assistance program in the country, assisting nearly 10,000 households with low- and moderate-incomes. However, the program lacks the statutory grounding and organizational structure for needed for oversight and growth. This bill would incorporate the core rules of MRVP into the general laws, rather than being re-established each year through the annual budget and would provide additional important program improvements.

**[An Act providing upstream homelessness prevention assistance to families, youth, and adults \(HD.1964 & SD 1169\)](#)** Sponsors: Rep. Marjorie Decker; Sen. Brendan Crighton  
This bill would put the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) homelessness prevention program into state statute, and ensure that benefits are available to households earlier in a housing or utility crisis. The bill also seeks to streamline access, improve cross-agency collaboration, and allow households to access up to twelve months of assistance, without arbitrary caps.

**[An Act improving emergency housing assistance for children and families experiencing homelessness \(HD1962 & SD185\)](#)** Sponsors: Rep. Marjorie Decker; Sen. Adam Gomez  
This omnibus legislation would address access and administrative issues for families and children seeking to access or retain Emergency Assistance shelter and HomeBASE rehousing benefits.

**[An Act to provide identification to youth and adults experiencing homelessness \(HD.3043 & SD.1243\)](#)** Sponsors: Rep. Jim O'Day; Sen. Robyn Kennedy  
The Mass ID access bill (a.k.a. Everyone Needs ID bill) would allow access to standard Mass IDs, not REAL ID Act-compliant Mass IDs, for which residents must provide additional verifications that meet federal standards. Versions of this bill were passed unanimously by the Senate during the past three sessions.

**[An Act establishing a bill of rights for individuals experiencing homelessness \(HD. 107\)](#)** Sponsors: Rep. Smitty Pignatelli and Rep. Frank Moran

This bill would recognize and affirm various rights of people experiencing homelessness, such as the right to move freely in public spaces, the right to confidentiality of records, the right to privacy of property, the right to register to vote and to vote, etc., and would provide additional civil rights protections for people experiencing homelessness.

**[An Act establishing the healthy homes program \(HD.3864 & SD.728\)](#)**

Sponsors: Reps. Manny Cruz & Shirley Arriaga & Senator John Keenan

This legislation will create the Massachusetts Healthy Homes program to improve the quality and safety of thousands of homes across the Commonwealth and to improve the health of its residents. These home improvements are also necessary to safely electrify the homes, as we work to achieve our urgent Climate Action Goals. This investment will improve about 5,000 homes, and over time improve the health of many more thousands of households.

**[An Act to improve the housing development incentive program \(HDIP\) \(SD. 1562\)](#)**

Sponsor: Senator Jamie Eldridge

HDIP provides millions in state tax credits and local tax breaks for developers of market rate and often above market/luxury housing in Gateway Cities. As rents continue to spike in these cities, HDIP supports only unaffordable housing. This bill would improve HDIP by: adding a share of affordability to the program; directing tax credits to weaker market or distressed areas rather than hot markets; requiring bedroom sizes suitable for families with children; requiring program transparency and public accountability.

**Additionally, in support of housing stability:**

**[An Act to Increase Regional Transit Accessibility \(RTA\) in the Commonwealth \(HD.2385; SD.1762\)](#)** Sponsors: Rep. Natalie Blas; Sen. Stu Moran

The RTA Advancement bill would improve and expand RTA service to better meet the needs of the diverse regions they serve by: increasing the funding floor for RTAs to support the move towards 7-day a week service; create a dedicated fund for RTAs; uplift community needs through an annual RTA Council report; and eliminate profitability as a performance metric for transit agencies.

**[An Act Providing Affordable and Accessible High Quality Early Education and Care to Promote Child Development and Well-being and Support the Economy \(HD2794/SD667\)](#)**

Sponsors: Reps Adrian Madaro and Kenneth Gordon; Senators Jason Lewis and Susan Moran This legislation would establish a system of affordable, high-quality early education and care for children from birth through age 5 as well as after-and-out-of-school time for children ages 5-12, and for children with special needs through age 15.

**[An Act to Lift Kids Out of Deep Poverty \(HD. 507 & SD. 501\)](#)** Sponsors: Rep. Marjorie

Decker; Sen. Saul DiDomenico This bill would raise cash assistance grants for Transitional Assistance for Families with Dependent Children and Emergency Aid to Elderly, Disabled and Children by 25% a year until they reach 50% of the Federal Poverty Level and would increase grants each year to keep pace with inflation.