

Western MA Task Force for Housing First/Individual Services Committee Minutes February 25, 2025

In attendance: roughly 80 attendees, including state legislators, legislative aides, city and town staff and housing/homelessness service providers and social service providers across multiple sectors

Federal actions/local consequences: we discussed the threat facing our federally funded housing and homelessness programs, especially regarding further delay in the release of CoC funding. It was pointed out that HUD CoC funds pay for roughly 4,000 supportive housing units statewide, i.e., the risk is vast.

We discussed taking action, specifically the **National Low-Income Housing Coalition's ACTION DAY on Feb. 27** to oppose federal cuts to our federal housing and homelessness programs. Please [go here to learn more and take quick action](#) on the 27th.

Pamela advised everyone to be [subscribed to the Network blog](#) to stay connected to further actions.

Hampden County Point in Time Count Update

Gerry shared initial Hampden County Point in Time Count Numbers:

- total count, 2,717 people
- # of individuals experiencing homelessness increased from 548 to 622
- # of unsheltered people increased from 177 to 211, the highest # ever counted
- overall the # decreased - due to the reductions of families
- did not find unsheltered families on the night of the count

Shelter/Warming Center Updates

- CSO - since January 1: - Springfield: 182 beds, served 306 individuals; Northampton; 45 beds, served 108 individuals; for hotel stays 62 individuals served over 31 days; Greenfield: 45 beds, served 74 individuals
- Craig's Doors (Amherst area) - constantly full, using overflow; hotel stays have totaled over \$100,000 (with thanks to state and city/town contributions and individual donors); received grant in partnership with Tapestry to support outreach work; shout-out to Valley CDC for their incredible support as their resource center has had to temporarily close (frozen pipes) and it has moved into Econo Lodge
- CHD (Hampden): small funding remains for emergency hotel funding; served 58 individuals over 286 nights; supporting Springfield overflow shelter at Wesley United Methodist Church (ending 2/28 but working to find additional funding to extend)
- Greenfield warming center: averaging 20-25 people each night, served over 500 people in total

- CHD Re: families (West Springfield and Northampton) - received notice from HLC that families who refuse to give CORI info after 5 days must leave shelter; also for ID - it is necessary to obtain or will have to exit as well; working on rehousing 64 families from their 2 hotel locations - massive effort (there is no option to re-enter the system or transfer to a shelter)
- Louison House (Northern Berkshires): full, using emergency cots to expand capacity
- ServiceNet (Pittsfield): shelter is full - averaging 20-25 people in the warming shelter each night

RAFT updates

- Hampden/Hampshire: 600 new applications/week, roughly 125 to 140 people each day, approx. 5-10 emergencies each day. Utility shut-off moratorium is ending soon - concerned.
- Berkshire County: also very high numbers. Seeing very high utilization of HomeBASE - serving 60 families (triple the usual).

Good housing news:

Hampden County: CHD is beginning their rapid rehousing program - up to 20 people will be moving into apartments; 3 projects under development - start date of 8/25: 29 enhanced SROs and 20 for chronically homeless people.-

Family homelessness report (thanks to Kelly Turley, MA Coalition for the Homeless)
The Legislature adopted the supplemental budget that includes \$425 million to fund the EA shelter system through June, 2025, along with many new restrictions including:

- reduce length of stay from 9 months to 6 months, eliminating the opportunity for 2 90-day extensions
- CORI checks required for all
- restrictions on immigrant families, requiring every family member to be a citizen or otherwise in MA legally - this is especially concerning given the federal administration's decision to end protected status for Haitians.
- Senate proposed the creation of a work group to look at the future of the EA program
- great concern about the undoing of the 40 year commitment to the right to shelter for families
- Learn more about the amendments that were filed [here](#). Thanks to Sen. Comerford and Sen. Gomez for their amendments in support of families.
- See the MA Coalition for the Homeless' legislative priorities here: <https://www.mahomeless.org/current-bill-and-budget-priorities>

State Budget and Policy Action

The Network is hosting its legislative meetings by county on March 7 and March 10. It will be sharing its FY26 budget priorities and legislative priorities - stay tuned for the

final versions. Thanks in advance to our many partners involved in bringing these priorities to our legislators' attention.

Pamela noted the Raise Up MA campaign re: Corporate Fair Share Legislation to advance equity and raise more revenues. Learn more here: <https://www.raiseupma.org/corporate-fair-share>

Pamela also noted the [new report](#) from the Mass Law Reform Institute on the Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP) - specifically the rising cost of this subsidy for high priced housing projects with almost no affordable units.

Rapid Rehousing Program: at the individual services meeting, we reviewed the rapid rehousing resources available - please [see info here](#).

Next meeting date: Thursday, March 20, 9-10 am; will combine Task Force and Individual Services this month as well (due to NLIHC conference the following week) - will take stock following this meeting re: continuing merger.