



Housing First  
for Hampden, Hampshire,  
Franklin and Berkshire Counties

October 21, 2025

The Honorable Robyn Kennedy and the Honorable Jay Livingstone  
Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities  
State House, Room 312-D and Room 146  
Boston, MA 02133

***RE: Testimony in support of An Act Establishing a Bill of Rights for People Experiencing Homelessness (House Bill 274)***

Dear Chair Kennedy and Chair Livingstone and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to submit this testimony on behalf of the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness in support of *An Act establishing a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness* (H. 274).

The Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness (“Network”) supports collaborative solutions across Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire Counties to prevent and end homelessness through a Housing First approach that centers racial equity. It includes hundreds of partners from virtually every community sector who are committed to making affordable and decent housing a reality for all in the western region.

The Network considers the enactment of this Bill of Rights for people experiencing homelessness a top legislative priority this Legislative Session. Its passage is especially critical as an increasing number of municipalities across the Commonwealth consider or enact encampment and loitering bans criminalizing being unhoused rather than addressing the complex causes of homelessness.

This bill would offer an important guide for state and local officials, underscoring that people experiencing homelessness are entitled to the same rights as any other resident of Massachusetts, including protections when people are seeking employment, housing, voter registration, and access to public spaces and places of public accommodation. It is especially urgent due to the dire lack of affordable housing and shrinking safety net, resulting in rising numbers of people facing homelessness.

We urge you to report out this bill favorably as soon as possible. Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

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