

## Western MA Task Force for Housing First Minutes – February 26, 2026

### Shelter Updates

- **Wesley United Methodist Church** emergency winter shelter (Springfield) is closing on 2/28 - funded through both HLC winter emergency funding and the City of Springfield. Roughly 50 people sleep there every night (250 unduplicated individuals). This poses a dramatic loss in shelter beds for Springfield/Hampden County and has implications for the entire region. We discussed Network advocacy with HLC to allocate additional funding; also discussed with the City of Springfield to determine if additional funds are available there. Pamela will reach out to HLC, copying our legislators on this call (special thanks for their readiness to act!) to express the urgency of the situation. *Note: HLC responded that they have no additional winter funds to allocate (they fully funded their proposal through the Church's requested date of 2/28; and suggested continued advocacy with the City).*
- **Center for Human Development** (Holyoke/Springfield): individual shelter is full; Point in Time count showed # of people living outside in Holyoke is higher than last year; re: family shelters: the number of empty beds continues to be high while families are declined access due to changes in eligibility rules, esp the lack of presumptive eligibility before documentation is provided
- **Craig's Doors** (Amherst): shelter is at capacity; hotel funds are mostly exhausted due to ongoing winter weather and storms; winding down Econolodge program (closing 4/1/26) due to Valley CDC rehabbing property for permanent affordable and supportive housing. Actively working with guests in developing and implementing transition plans. Please contact Shari Carlson (exec director) with any referrals to any available beds in area programs (scarlson@craigdoors.org)
- **Greenfield warming center**: has been open for 45 nights, likely to hit 50; averaging 12 guests each night
- **Clinical & Support Options (CSO)** - shelters are full from Springfield to Northampton to Greenfield; 3 beds available in medical respite program in Northampton, contact Mark Jachym at mark.jachym@csoinc.org.
- **ServiceNet (Pittsfield)** - individual shelter is consistently full; warming center has a nightly average of 40 people; newly opened Community Engagement Center, The First - 7 days a week, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm (daily census up to 50 people); re: family shelter - still extremely low census and no referrals and families are continuing to seek help with nowhere to go. Good news: Hearthway projects are opening up and individuals are being moved into housing!

### RAFT Update

For Hampden/Hampshire County (Way Finders), they are continuing to see roughly 800 applications each week and just under 200 people/day seeking assistance. Berkshire County reported similarly high flow of applications (and Franklin County is presumed).

### **Good Greenfield Housing News**

Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority announced that their 176 Main Street development in Greenfield was included in the Governor's most recent announcement of LIHTC projects: [see here](#) for more detail. This will bring 32 new affordable family-sized apartments to downtown Greenfield!

### **Legislative Priorities' Update**

Pamela flagged the [Network's legislative priorities](#) and the continuing work on them as this Session draws closer to the July 31 end of formal session.

The [Local Option Rent Stabilization Bill](#): we heard from Carolyn Chu, Executive Director of Homes for all MA, about the continued advocacy on this bill. The most recent statewide poll showed close to 60% support for rent control and in western MA specifically closer to 80% support. While the rent control ballot initiative qualified to be on the ballot in November (with a second round of signature collecting slated for May), work continues to pass the local option rent control bill pending in the Legislature. Thanks to our delegation members who are co-sponsoring this bill and to Sen. Gomez for his lead sponsorship.

The [Real Estate Transfer Fee](#) for Affordable Housing: our western MA State Senator Jo Comerford is lead sponsor of this bill that would allow communities the option to collect a small transfer fee on high end sales that would then be dedicated to build more affordable housing in the community. Advocacy continues within the State House, including finding ways to combine various pending bills on this issue. Stay tuned for opportunities to weigh in.

### **HUD update re: Continuum of Care (CoC) funding:**

(thanks to the National Alliance to End Homelessness for this update):

In a recent petition to the court, HUD acknowledged that it intends to issue renewal funding for grants that expire in quarter 1 and quarter 2 noncompetitively.

However, there has been no communication from HUD to CoCs or recipients of CoC funding on when these grantees can expect their funding. Moreover, in the plaintiff's response they indicate that HUD has indicated it would need a month and a half to issue funds for just the first quarter—even though those renewals represent only 10 percent of total funding and even though HUD has no discretion in granting them.

Given what HUD has demonstrated thus far in its handling of FY2025 CoC Program funds, there is grave concern about how HUD is intending to process these awards. There is also grave concern that HUD has suggested it will issue an entirely new funding competition for grants that would start on July 1. Both of our CoCs are seriously impacted by these delays and threat of a sudden new funding competition.

### **What we can do:**

Contact our US Senators and Representatives to reach out to leadership on the Appropriations Committee or THUD Appropriations Subcommittee and urge them to hold HUD accountable to

complying with Congress' direction and intent for noncompetitively renewing grants in quarter one and beyond.

Contact information:

[Senator Elizabeth Warren](#)

[Senator Ed Markey](#)

[Rep. Jim McGovern](#)

[Rep. Richie Neal](#)

### **Point in Time Count Updates**

Both CoCs saw some drop in individual homelessness (more detail to come). While the numbers still remain high and the in-flow into homelessness continues, the decline is a result of new permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing resources becoming available. This housing would be gravely threatened by HUD's failure to fund the CoCs. We are at tremendous risk of losing units we urgently need.

### **Family homelessness update**

Kelly Turley of the MA Coalition for the Homeless provided this update:

Current census of families in EA shelter is 1,481, down from its peak of 7,500 families. Families are continuing to experience the dire impact of the verification requirements (loss of presumptive eligibility) and time limits on shelter. The Governor's budget did not address either of these barriers in her proposed FY27 budget. Attention has turned to the state legislature in the hopes they will make necessary policy changes in their FY27 budget proposals. The Network will continue to work in partnership with our legislators to advance these changes.

### **New Housing and Livable Communities' Secretary appointed**

Secretary Ed Augustus announced his decision to leave his current position to take a job in the private sector. Gov. Healey appointed Juana Matias to replace him, beginning April 1. Read more about her in the [Governor's press release here](#).

**Next meeting date: Thursday, March 26, 9 am**