



Housing First  
for Hampden, Hampshire,  
Franklin and Berkshire Counties

March 21, 2026

Senate Chair Cindy Friedman and House Chair Alice Peisch  
Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions  
State House  
Boston, MA 02133

**RE: Support of An Act to Protect Tenants by Limiting Rent Increases, H.5008**

Dear Chair Friedman and Chair Peisch:

I am writing on behalf of the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness (“Network”) in support of An Act to Protect Tenants by Limiting Rent Increases, H.5008.

The Network convenes over 150 partners from across our western region, including Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire Counties, working to prevent and end homelessness with a housing first approach that centers racial equity.

Rent stabilization is critical to homelessness prevention. The Network supports the bill to Protect Tenants by Limiting Rent Increases (H.5008) because the crisis of displacement due to spiraling rent hikes is as pervasive in western Massachusetts as it is across the entire Commonwealth. With rent increases of 30 to 50% increasingly common, more and more residents are suddenly having their lives upended, facing the threat of homelessness, with no possibility of affording the rent increases and nowhere else to go.

Just one example: In the City of Easthampton, a small community of roughly 16,000 people, over the last year, owners of multiple buildings have imposed dramatic rent increases on the dozens of residents who live there. Many residents are elderly; some are single parents with young children; some are immigrants – all are struggling to make ends meet.

In one instance, a 67-year old resident who has lived in the area for decades, returned home one day to discover a notice posted on her door declaring a 35% rent increase - \$400/month - with 12 days to sign a new lease or risk eviction. It was the dead of winter. She knew it would be impossible to find another place to live. As she put it: “I panicked, I cried, and I signed the lease.” Her rent is now 42% of her income, and she is barely staying afloat.

This scenario is being played out almost daily across each of the four western counties and the entire Commonwealth as a whole.

This bill is critical to stop out-of-town corporate investors from buying buildings and hiking rents astronomically. And our communities as a whole will benefit as well: studies show that rent

stabilization works. Where rent increases are capped at predictable and reasonable levels, tenants move less frequently and have more stability.

We ask the Legislature to act now to pass this bill to protect tenants and stabilize our communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela Schwartz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pamela Schwartz, Director  
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