

The Power of Partnerships: Working to Protect and to Push

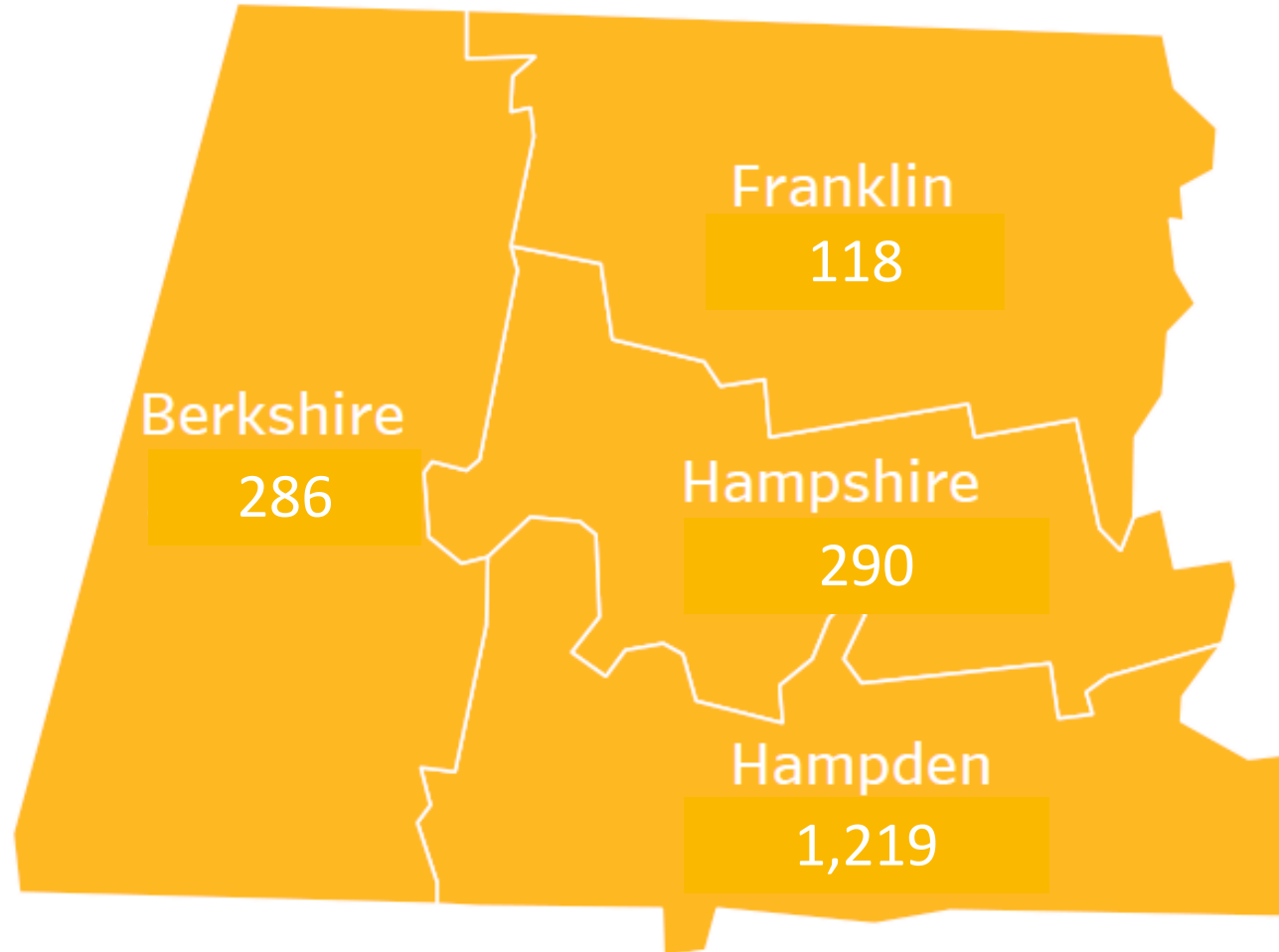
Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness
10th Annual Regional Gathering
Holyoke Community College
May 29, 2026

The Annual Homeless
Point in Time Count:
A Big Drop
for Complex Reasons

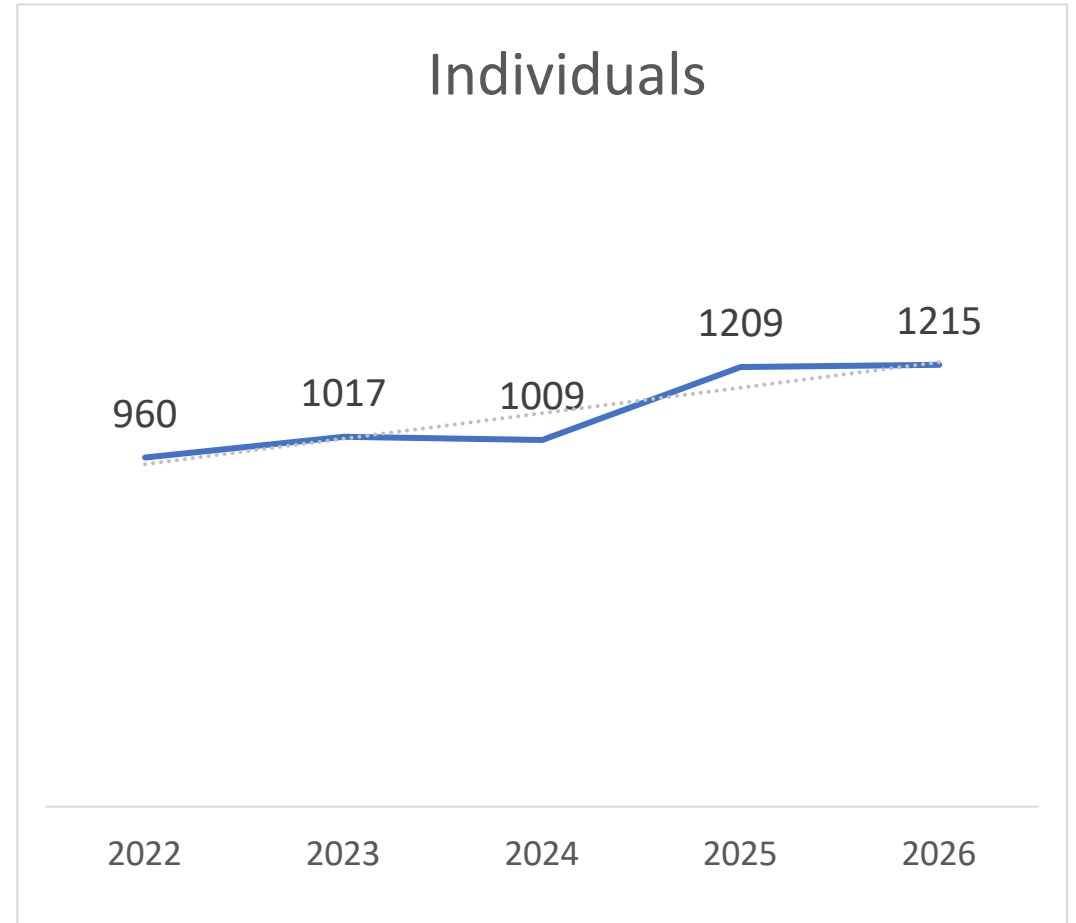
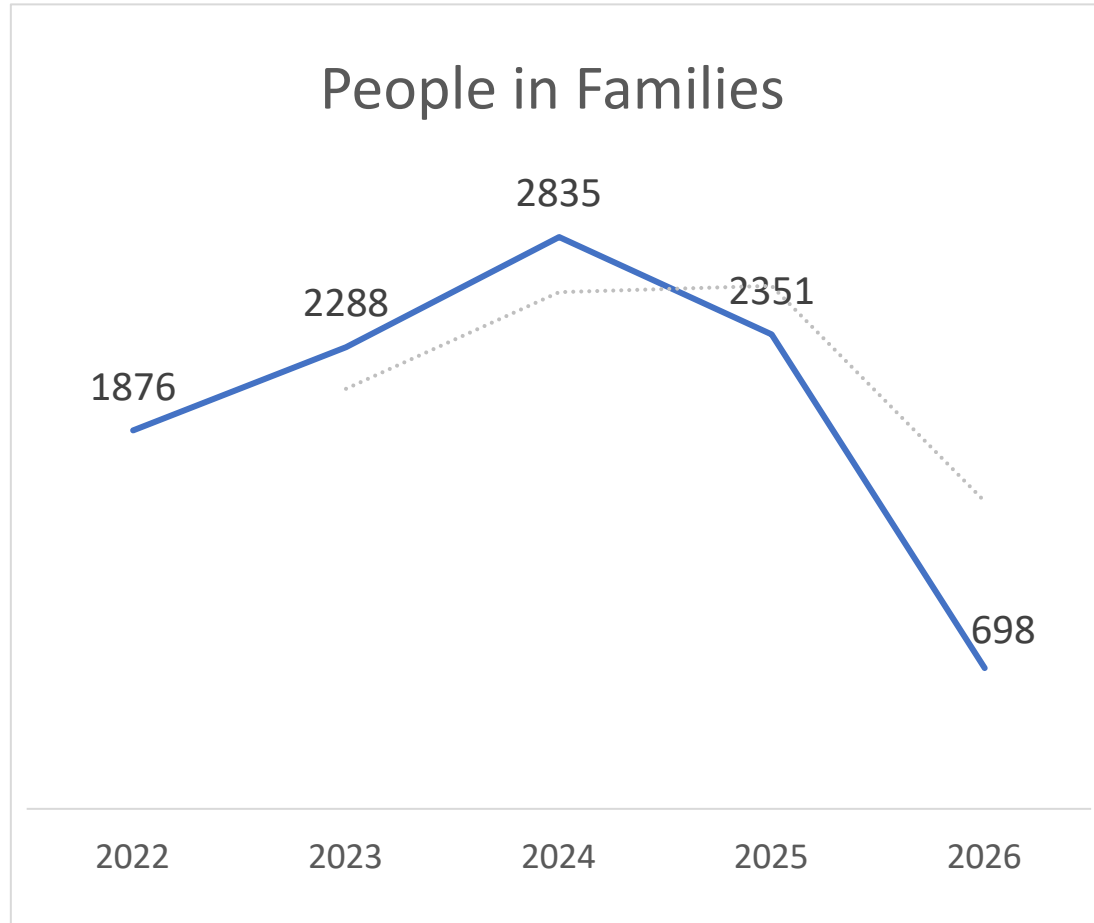
1,913 People Homeless - January 2026

Annual Point-in-Time Count

Decrease of 1,647 (46.3%) since 2025 PIT Count



Homelessness in Western MA: Trend 2022–2026



Source: Continuum of Care Annual Point-in-Time Counts, 2022–2026

Why the drop in family homelessness?

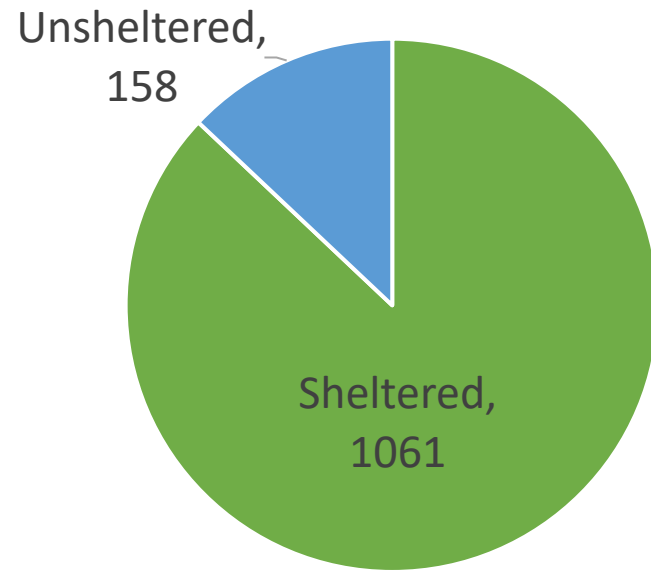
- **New State restrictions:** shelter stay time limit of 6 months; families required to submit all paperwork prior to access; exclusion of most families with criminal justice involvement
 - **Immigration:** Federal policies shut down the border; state Emergency Assistance policy shift that excludes undocumented families
 - **State increased investment** in HomeBASE rehousing program, plus voucher assistance for long-stayers – **474 families rehoused in 2025 across western MA**
-

In process:

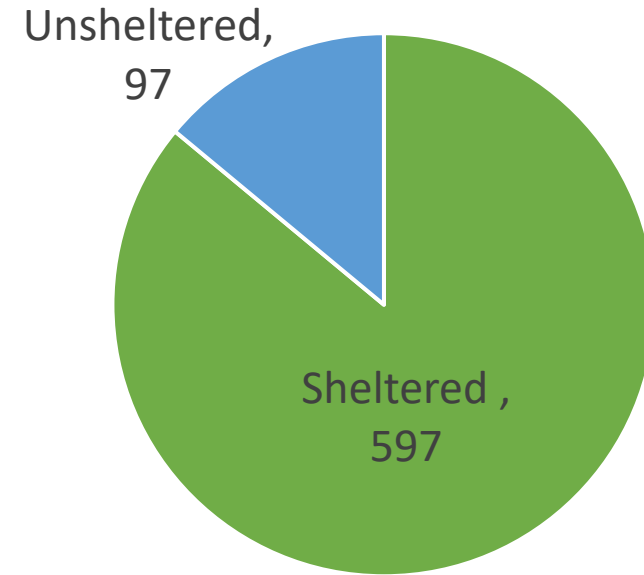
- Gov. Healy's FY26 supplemental budget proposes to **increase shelter stay time limit to 9 months**
- Advocacy ongoing to **increase HomeBASE annual benefit** to prevent families from falling off the "cliff" at the end of the 2 year funding cycle; to enforce last year's budget language requiring **access to HomeBASE benefits for a 3rd year** if needed (HLC has paused this)

13% of people counted were unsheltered

Hampden County

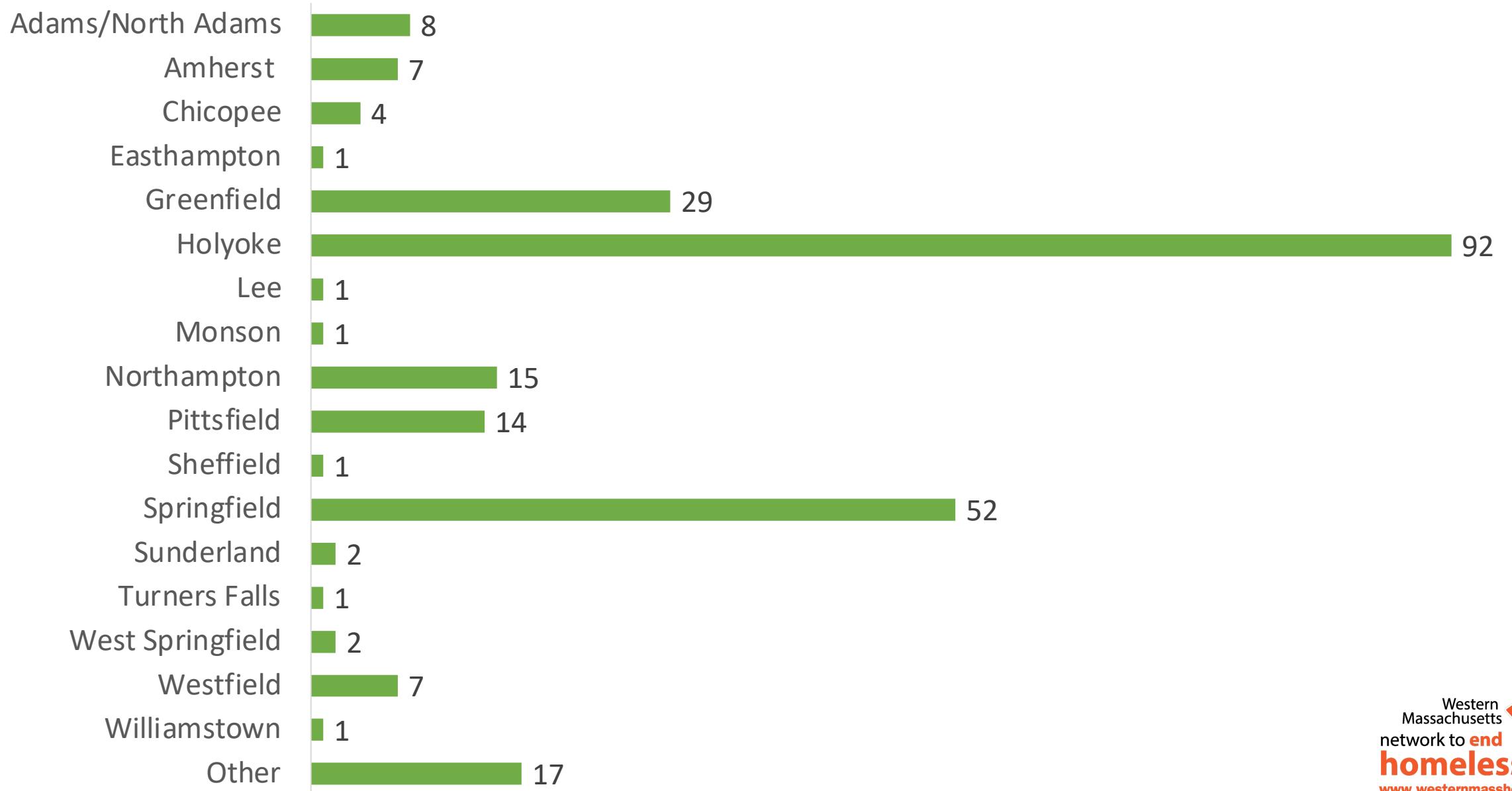


Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden Counties



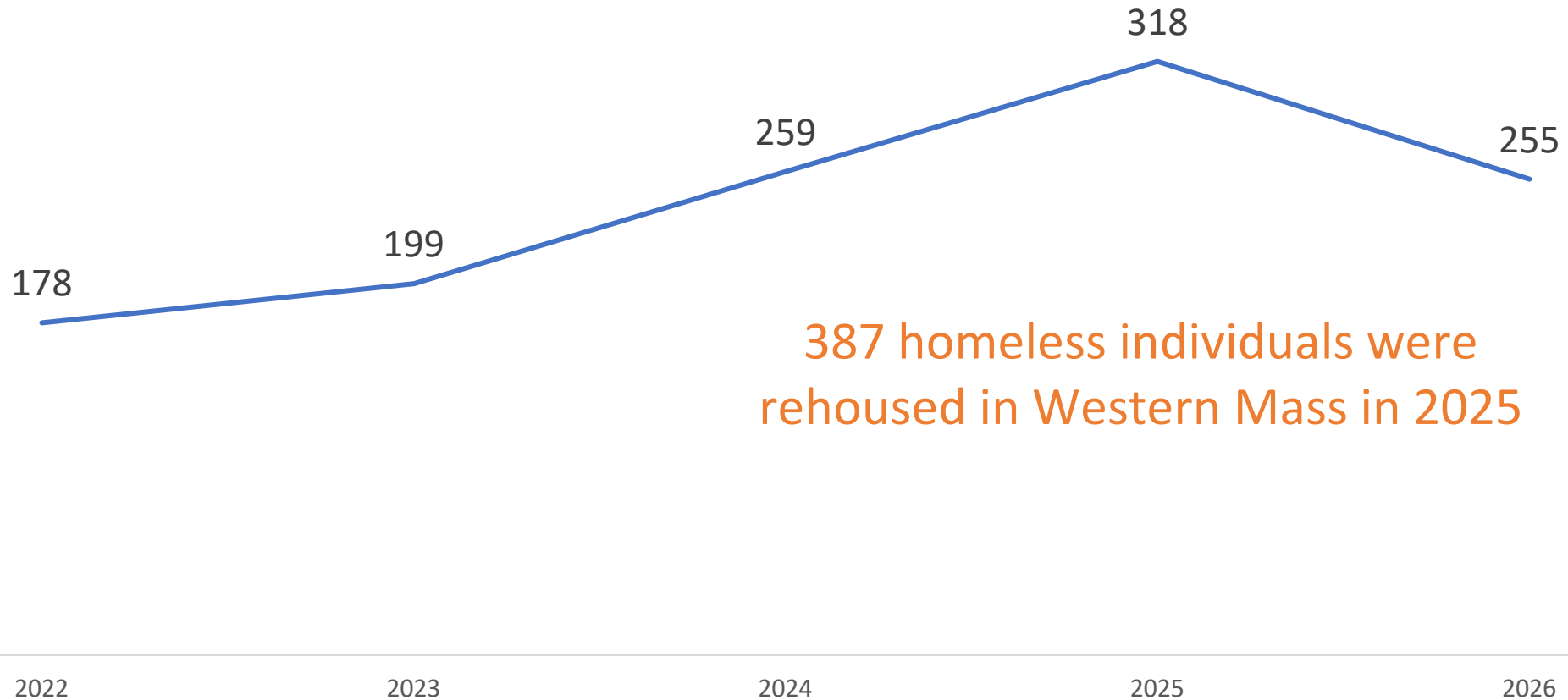
An annual July count shows that the unsheltered population swells in the summer. The Three County CoC's 2025 summer count found 143 unsheltered people.

Location of Unsheltered Homeless - January 2026

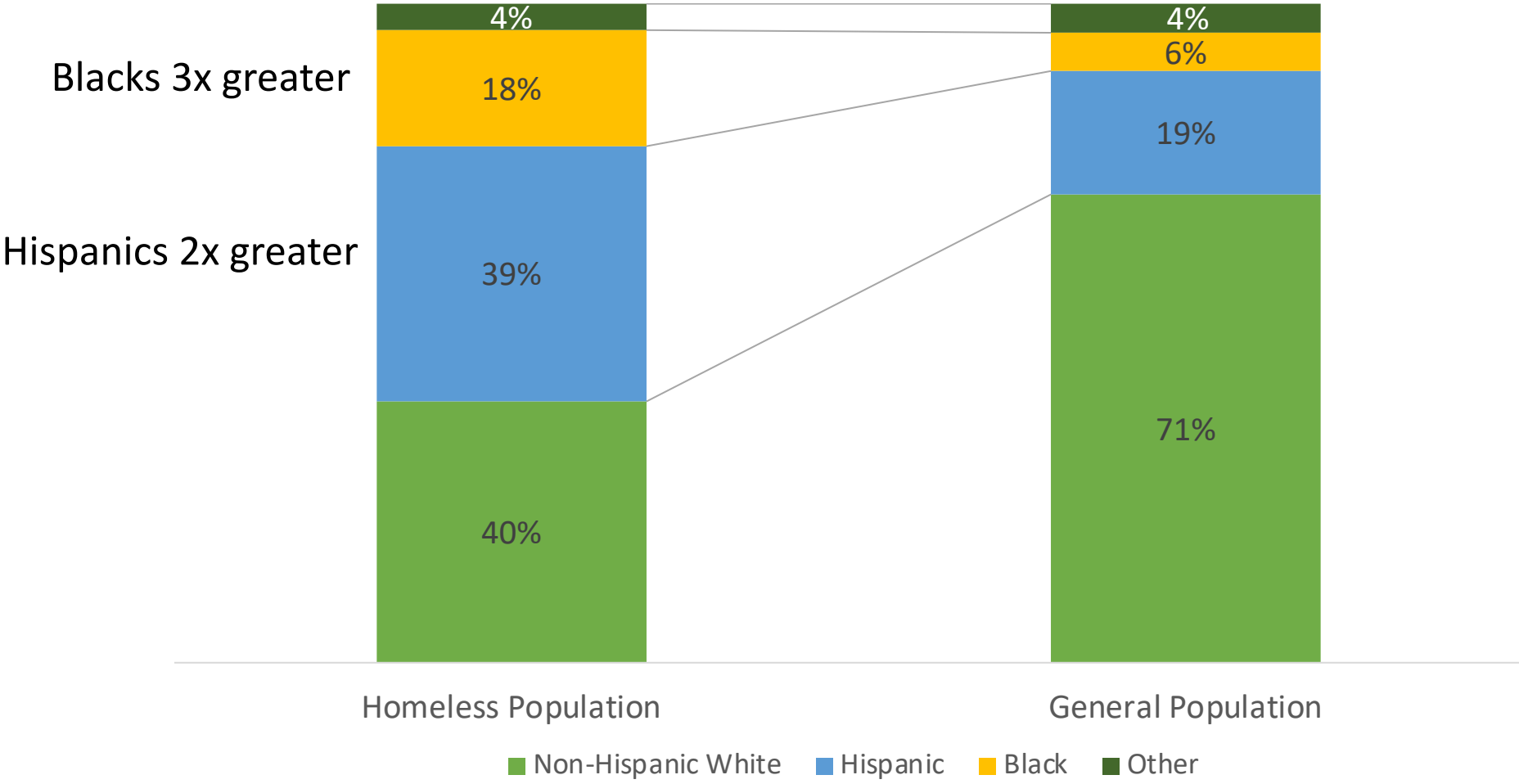


Unsheltered Homeless at Point-in-Time Count

Trend 2022–2026



People of Color are Overrepresented in the Homeless Population



Sources: Continuum of Care 2026 Point-in-Time Count; General Population – U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (Table DP05)



Rising Rents,
Facing Evictions,
Seeking Assistance to
Stay Housed

Rent have spiked since 2022



Hampden: **up 37%**

Hampshire: **up 58%**

Franklin: **up 39%**

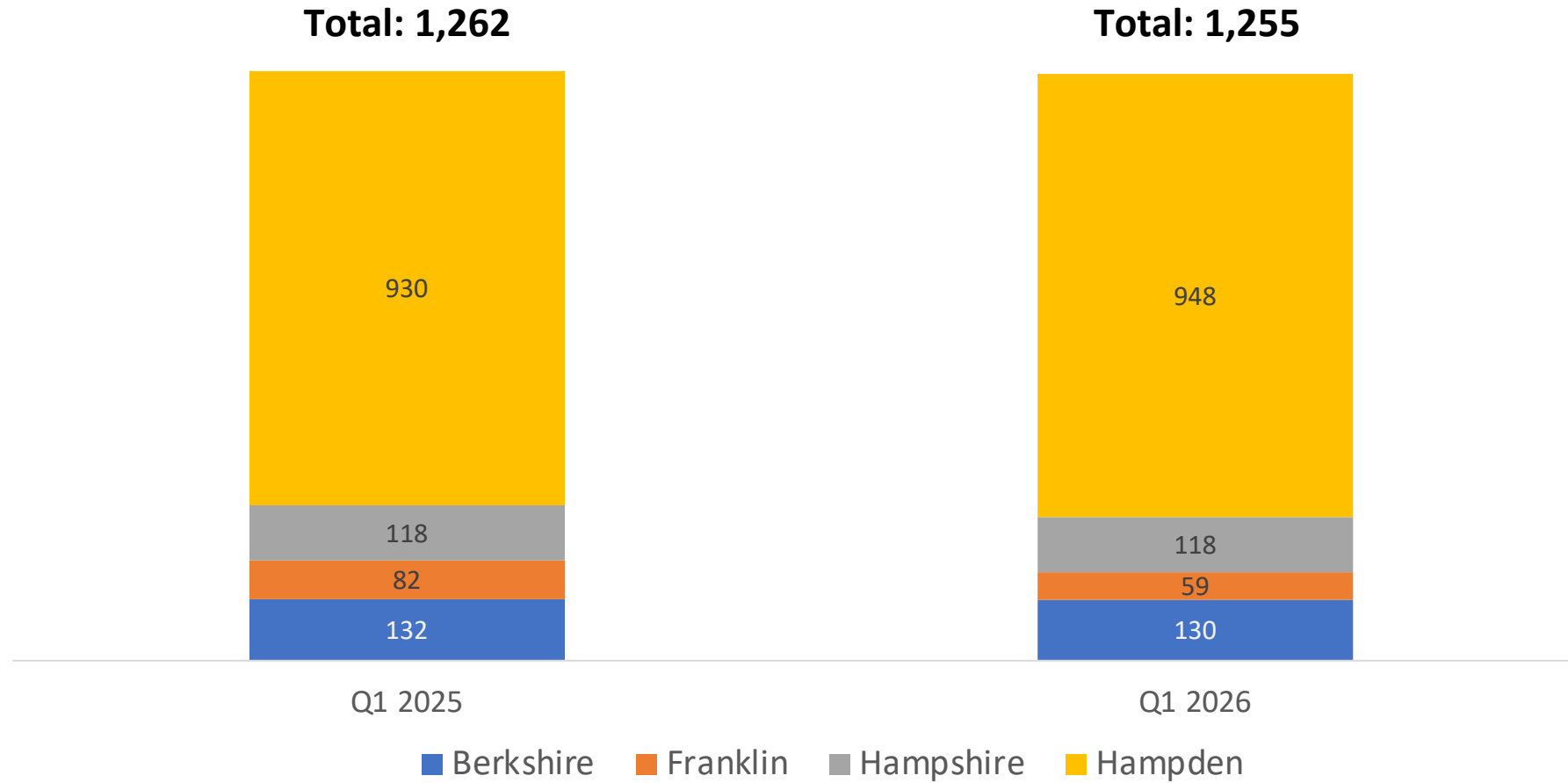
Berkshire: **up 10%**

In addition, incomes have not kept pace with inflation

Throughout Western MA, **53% of renters are cost-burdened**, meaning they pay more than 30% of income for rent while **30% of renters pay more than 50% of income for rent**

Rent increases calculation based on HUD-published Fair Market rents, comparing FY22 to FY26, using inflation-adjusted 2026 dollars
Cost burden data: Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies tabulations of US Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/renter-cost-burdens-are-widespread>

Eviction Filings Continue to Threaten Housing Stability

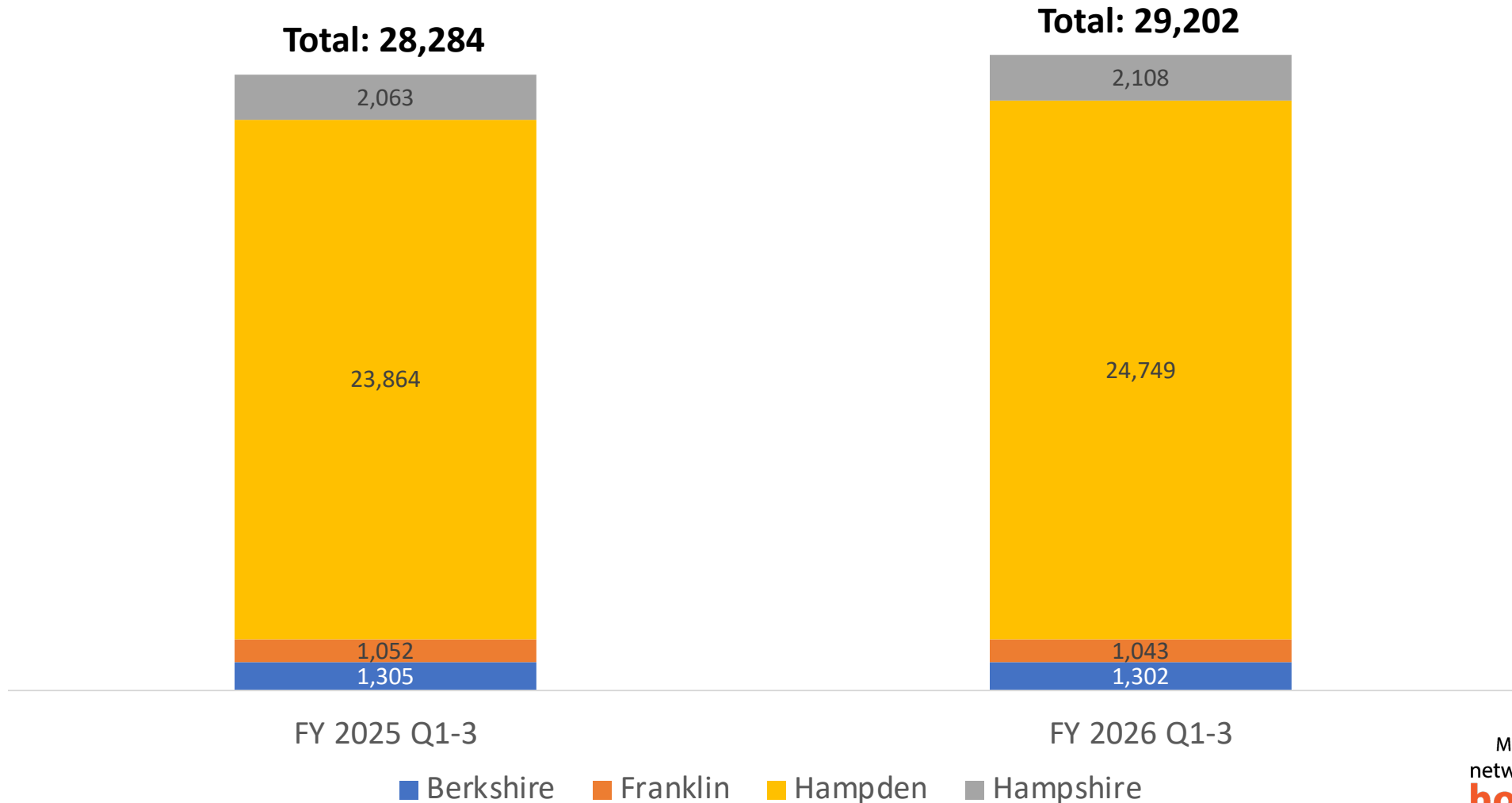


Source: Massachusetts Housing Court

Demand for RAFT Only Rises

RAFT applications have increased ~3.3% since FY2025

Approximately 200 people seek RAFT assistance every day in Hampden County alone



The Federal Threat Looms
Larger Than Ever

The Federal Threat: Rule Changes Would Cause Great Harm

HUD has proposed rule changes that would result in the loss of housing and safe shelter for thousands of residents in Massachusetts:

- **COMMENTS DUE JUNE 29: eliminates the Equal Access Rule**, ending protection for LGBTQ+ - requiring shelter placement to align with biological sex rather than gender identity
- **Mixed-Status Rule:** Eliminate housing eligibility for all mixed-status households
- **Time Limits/Work Requirement Rule:** Give local housing authorities broad authority to impose time limits and work requirements to maintain housing
- **30 –Day Notice Rule:** End requirement to provide tenants 30-day notice before filing eviction for non-payment of rent

Thank you to our legislators for adding your voices in opposition!

Loss of Permanent Supportive Housing

HUD Continuum of Care Program

HUD's anticipated reduction of funding for supportive housing will have a terrible impact on the Massachusetts homeless response system

- Mass will **lose 2000–2500 HUD-funded supportive housing units** in 2027
- Existing vulnerable tenants likely to return to homelessness
- Loss of these units – the most effective response to unsheltered and chronic homelessness – will further stretch municipal resources and undermine overall economic health

Massachusetts Has a Critical Role to Play

What Massachusetts Can Do

Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities

Continuums of Care (CoCs) ask EOHLC to **play a convening role and lead a coordinated response** to address the projected loss of federally-funded supportive housing across Massachusetts

What Massachusetts Can Do

Budget Priorities

FY27 Budget – Recommendations for Conference Committee

- **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH):** \$10.5m (Senate), a \$500,000 increase, especially critical in the face of HUD's drastic policy change and loss of PSH units
- **RAFT:** \$210 million (House), \$2.5m increase from FY26, \$8.8m higher than Senate
- **Access to Counsel:** \$3 million (House), increase from FY26 2.5m
- **Housing Consumer Education Centers:** \$5.7m (Senate), level funded, still lower than FY25
- **Winter shelter beds:** \$8 million (House), new line-item
- **Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP):** – \$281 million (House), \$30m increase from FY26
- **Emergency Assistance** in FY26 supplemental budget: provide adequate funding; expand initial eligibility from 6 to 9 months and restore presumptive eligibility

What Massachusetts Can Do

Legislative Priorities

Give municipalities the option to:

- Stabilize rents and protect tenants (H.2328/S.1447)
- Pass a transfer fee for affordable housing (H.3056/S.1937)
- Pass the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (H.1544/S.998)

Statewide:

- Improve Emergency Housing Assistance for Children and Families (H.216/S.136)
- Strengthen Access to Counsel (H.1952/S.968)
- Codify the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (H.1547/S.1008)
- Establish a Massachusetts Foreclosure Prevention Program (H.1090/S.765)
- Enact the Supportive Housing Finance Board (H.1552/S.991)

See more at <http://westernmasshousingfirst.org>

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and take action together:*

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