Western MA Task Force for Housing First Meeting Minutes - 10/29/26
In attendance: roughly 40 partners, including state legislators legislative staff, city/town staff and housing/homelessess/community partners

Individual Shelter and Encampment Updates

- All shelters are full
- Awaiting word from Exec Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) around the winter shelter expansion funds - should be released next week with a contract date of 11/15. The Network will communicate around the awards as soon as the info is available.
- Craig's Doors' 35 beds are full, the resource center is seeing 25-30 people each day; over 300 new individuals seen this year, a confirmation of the continuing flow of more people into homelessness; notably seeing just over 25% of their population at 55 years and older
- City of Northampton: seeing record levels of new people who appear houseless in the city; working to resolve a large encampment that has become a public health crisis, partnering with the faith community - religious leadesr sent a letter to the Governor asking for state assistance
- Franklin County and N. Quabbin Opioid Task Force: seeing record numbers of unhoused people in the region; data shows encampments rose 83% from 12 to 22 encampments over the year; # of unsheltered increased 36%
- Berkshire County (ServiceNet) - seeing numbers up at their Housing Resource Center
- Friends of the Homeless (CSO) - going through a staffing crisis in Northampton. On the positive news, 36 permanent supportive housing units in Springfield and 36 in Greenfield have opened up and are practically entirely occupied - many people housed!!

Family homelessness update (with thanks to Kelly Turley from the MA Coalition for the Homeless)

- The House passed its FY26 "close-out supplemental budget" - it did not include language to extend shelter stays to 9 months. It also did not include amendments to address HomeBASE renewals or adopt the MA ID bill (to create easier access to MA ID for people experiencing homelessnes).
- Re: the issue of HomeBASE: EOHLC has paused allowing any 3rd year renewals despite legislative authority to provide them. Hoping the Legislature will take this up to enforce this language. In the meanwhile, litigation has been filed by 2 families denied the extension in Suffolk County Superior Court - See news coverage here. Seeing an increasing number of families who want to stay housed but can no longer afford it.
- The number of families in EA remains extremely low - 1,500 families (down from 7,500 families several years ago).

Supplemental budget updates

- Representative Lindsay Sabadosa shared an update on the House FY26 close-out budget that recently passed. Good news: the House added $54.5 million to support additional DTA case workers, which is critical to enable the provision of SNAP benefits. Also $13.8

million was allocated to the MA Office of Victim Assistance (MOVA), supporting people who have been victims of domestic violence, a significant contributing factor to homelessness; also funded Fair Housing Trust Fund

- Senator Jo Comerford shared that its version of this close-out budget will be released today by Ways and Means and then will go to the amendment phase and debate and vote next week. She encouraged us to advocate for our amendments. She also noted that now is the time to advocate to get our priorities in the Governor's House 1 budget that is filed in January, and that the new bill filing deadline is the 3rd week in January.

HUD/CoC Update

Annie Martin from Mass. Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA) reported on the state of litigation and funding for the CoCs. Right now, litigation is ongoing, challenging HUD's NOFO (Notice of Funding Opportunity). The NOFO was allowed to continue by the Appeals Court so applications were submitted on 9/30. Awards should be announced by 12/1. But there is tension for CoCs based on HUD's unpredictability around releasing funds. Our national partners are encouraging us to reach out to Congressional members to urge them to require HUD to automatically renew all projects that are expiring in this calendar year in order to avoid disruption in services.

MHSA is holding a mobilization call on November 18. Learn more and register here.

Network Updates:

- Please go here for the latest advocacy efforts, including these organizational sign-on letters by our national partners
- Pamela also reported out on her leadership transition - read more here. She will be here until a replacement is hired or as late as June, 2027.

Next meeting date: in view of the end-of-month holidays for Nov. and Dec., we will have one meeting to straddle both months on Tuesday, Dec. 8, 9 am.