



# HOMELESS BILL OF RIGHTS

## HOUSE BILL 1129

**Lead Sponsor:**

Representative William Smitty Pignatelli

The Homeless Bill of Rights would entitle those experiencing homelessness to the same rights as any other resident of Massachusetts.



### Legislative Co-Sponsors

**Senators** Michael A. Barrett, Sal N. DiDomenico, James B. Eldridge, Linda Dorcena Forry, Jason M. Lewis, Barbara L'Italien, and Mark C. Montigny **Representatives** Ruth B. Balsler, Tricia Farley-Bouvier, Paul Brodeur, Antonio F.D. Cabral, Gailanne M. Cariddi, Michael Day, Marjorie C. Decker, Diana DiZoglio, Daniel M. Donahue, Michelle M. DuBois, Carolyn C. Dykema, Carole Fiola, Sean Garballey, Susan Williams Gifford, Kenneth I. Gordon, Jonathan Hecht, Paul R. Heroux, Kay Khan, Jay Livingstone, Elizabeth A. Malia, Brian R. Mannal, Paul McMurtry, Frank A. Moran, James J. O'Day, William Smitty Pignatelli, Denise Provost, David M. Rogers, Byron Rushing, Tom Sannicandro, Theodore C. Speliotis, Thomas M. Stanley, Benjamin Swan, and Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.

### Summary

An Act Providing a Homeless Bill of Rights, House Bill 1129, would establish a definition of those experiencing homelessness and protect key rights of all residents, whether or not they are experiencing homelessness. The bill is modeled after landmark legislation passed in 2012 in Rhode Island. Similar legislation has since passed in Connecticut and Illinois.

### Bill Status

House Bill 1129 was filed on January 14, 2015, and was sent to the Joint Committee on Housing on March 10, 2015. The committee heard the bill on July 28, 2015, and reported out the bill favorably on December 17, 2015. House Bill 1129 now is before the House Committee on Ways and Means.

### Why is it necessary to create a Homeless Bill of Rights?

The Homeless Bill of Rights would entitle people experiencing homelessness to the same rights as any other resident of Massachusetts. The Bill of Rights seeks to outline those rights so as to prevent discrimination based on housing status. The legislation recognizes the increased prevalence of homelessness in Massachusetts due to widespread economic hardship, the insufficient availability of safe, affordable housing, and a weakened social safety net.

### **"No person's rights, privileges, or access to public services may be denied or abridged solely because he or she is experiencing homelessness."**

The rights included in the Homeless Bill of Rights are the right to move freely in public spaces, the right to equal treatment by municipal agencies (such as police departments), freedom from discrimination in employment, the right to emergency medical care, the right to register to vote and to vote, freedom from disclosure of records, and the right to a reasonable expectation of privacy of property.

### **The bill seeks to have the rights outlined be treated as a statement of legislative intent, as a guide for state and municipal agencies.**

**Protect the Rights of All Residents of Massachusetts:  
Support An Act Providing a Homeless Bill of Rights, House Bill 1129!**

For more information, please contact Kelly Turley, Director of Legislative Advocacy, at [kelly@mahomeless.org](mailto:kelly@mahomeless.org) or 781-595-7570 x17.

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