



**MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS**

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

## **Take Action to Establish a Bill of Rights for People Experiencing Homelessness**

**Please cosponsor and actively support An Act establishing a bill of rights for individuals experiencing homelessness ([House Bill 211](#)) and An Act providing a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness ([Senate Bill 1112](#)).**

**Sponsored by Representative Smitty Pignatelli, Representative Frank Moran, and Senator Rebecca Rausch**

### **Why is the Bill of Rights needed?**

People experiencing homelessness often are subjected to discrimination and mistreatment based on their housing status. The bill of rights is a guide for state and local officials emphasizing that people experiencing homelessness are entitled to the same rights as any other resident of Massachusetts. The bill of rights seeks to outline those rights 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. The bills are modeled after landmark legislation passed in 2012 in Rhode Island. Similar legislation has passed since in places such as Connecticut, Illinois, and Puerto Rico.

### **What would the Bill of Rights do?**

1. Extend anti-discrimination protections in Chapter 151B and Chapter 272 of the Massachusetts General Laws to persons experiencing homelessness, including protections when seeking employment, housing, voter registration, and access to public spaces and places of public accommodation.
2. Secure the right of persons experiencing homelessness to rest, seek shelter from the elements, occupy a legally parked car, pray, eat, and avoid needless harassment in public spaces.
3. Provide people experiencing homelessness with the right to a private right of action in the event of a violation of their rights provided under this bill.
4. Repeal Sections 63 through 69 of Chapter 272 of the Massachusetts General Laws, which includes archaic and derogatory terminology and laws criminalizing homelessness.

### **Who has already cosponsored the Bill of Rights?**

As of September 19<sup>th</sup>, the bill has been sponsored or cosponsored by Representatives Pignatelli (sponsor), Frank Moran (sponsor), Arriaga, Ashe, Blais, Doherty, DuBois, Duffy, Gifford, Gonzalez, Hamilton, Hawkins, Higgins, Holmes, LeBoeuf, Lewis, Montaña, Murray, O'Day, Reyes, Sabadosa, Sousa, and Tyler, and Senators Rausch (sponsor), Comerford, DiDomenico, Eldridge, and Velis.

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### **Which organizations have endorsed the Bill of Rights?**

As of September 19<sup>th</sup>, the bill has been endorsed by organizations across the Commonwealth, including Abby's House, Action Inc., Alliance of Cambridge Tenants (ACT), Allston Brighton Health Collaborative, Amherst Survival Center, Berkshire Housing, Boston Center for Independent Living, Brazilian Women's Group, Breaktime, Catholic Charities Worcester County, Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance, City Life/Vida Urbana, Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc., Community Service Network, Inc., Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries, Disability Law Center, Dismas House of Massachusetts, DOVE, Inc., Emmanuel Church in the City of Boston, Family Health Center of Worcester, Family Promise North Shore Boston, Fenway Health, First Church Shelter, Friends of Boston's Homeless, Grandmothers' Village Project, Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), Grow Food Northampton, HomeStart, Inc., Horizons For Homeless Children, Housing Greenfield, Justice 4 Housing, Lawrence CommunityWorks, Lazarus House Inc., LEO, Inc., Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Mass Senior Action Council, MLPB, My Brother's Table, My Life My Choice, One Family, Opportunity Communities, LLC, Out Now, Poor People's United Fund, Progressive Massachusetts, Rosie's Place, Safe Passage, SeniorCare Inc., Somerville Community Corporation, St. Clare of Assisi, Stop Bullying Coalition, Tapestry Health, Temple Sinai of Sharon, Inc., The Center for Teen Empowerment, United South End Settlements, United Way of Greater Fall River, and Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness.

### **What is the status of the Bill of Rights?**

The bills were assigned to the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities on February 16, 2023. The bills were heard by the Committee on June 13, 2023.

**Please cosponsor and actively support [House Bill 211](#) and [Senate Bill 1112](#) to establish a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness!**

**For more information, please contact Kelly Turley at the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless: [kelly@mahomeless.org](mailto:kelly@mahomeless.org) or 781-595-7570 x17.**

*-Last updated September 19, 2023*