



City of Northampton

MASSACHUSETTS

In the City Council, August 19, 2021

Upon the Recommendation of: Councilor Alex Jarrett
 Councilor John Thorpe
 Councilor Michael Quinlan

R-21.315 A RESOLUTION RELATIVE TO COVID-19 HOUSING EQUITY

- WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic has left tens of thousands of Massachusetts residents in a health, economic, and housing crisis; and
- WHEREAS, The temporary federal eviction moratorium is set to expire on October 3, is vulnerable to legal challenge and as written still leaves thousands of tenants at risk of eviction; and
- WHEREAS, Current state protections (Chapter 257 of the Acts of 2020) provide some safeguards against evictions but they do not go far enough to keep tenants housed; and
- WHEREAS, No federal or state law currently exists to provide any protection against foreclosure; and
- WHEREAS Over 2,700 new eviction cases have been filed in Western Massachusetts since the lifting of the state eviction moratorium in October, 2020 (over 20,000 statewide) and 585 homes in Western Massachusetts face the threat of foreclosure; and
- WHEREAS, 45% of Northampton households are rented; and
- WHEREAS, The economic crisis in general and the eviction crisis in particular created by the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a disproportionate effect on communities of color and low income individuals across Massachusetts; and
- WHEREAS, The federal government has allocated over \$800 million in rental assistance to

the Commonwealth with only a fraction of those funds having yet reached eligible tenants; and

WHEREAS, Western Massachusetts' largest administrator of rental assistance, Way Finders, reports receiving 400-500 applications for rental assistance per week, as many as 100 per day, with an application processing time of 4-5 weeks; and

WHEREAS, Taking this public health emergency out of the courts will spare tenants the trauma of an eviction proceeding while ensuring payment to the landlord for back rent due; and

WHEREAS, Preventing displacement is in the interest of public health, racial justice, equity, and fairness; and

WHEREAS, Strong legislative action is required to prevent unnecessary evictions, foreclosures, displacement, and to ensure a more timely and equitable distribution of rental assistance funds; and

WHEREAS, An Act to Prevent COVID-19 Evictions and Foreclosures and Promote an Equitable Housing Recovery (H.1434/S.891) would protect public health, support tenants, homeowners, and small-scale landlords alike; and

WHEREAS, This Act has garnered support from Northampton Mayor Narkewicz, and four other mayors and town managers in the region; 94 Representatives and Senators (20 from Western Massachusetts) including Senator Jo Comerford and Representative Lindsay Sabadosa; and over 50 Western Massachusetts groups and 150 statewide from every sector of our communities;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of Northampton asks the State Legislature to move with all deliberate speed and urgency to pass S.891 and H.1434, An Act to Prevent COVID-19 Evictions and Foreclosures and Promote an Equitable Housing Recovery.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Administrative Assistant to the City Council shall send a copy of this Resolution to Governor Charles Baker; the co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Housing, Senator John Keenan and Representative James Arciero; the presenters of the bills, Representatives Frank A. Moran and Kevin G. Honan and Senator Patricia D. Jehlen; and Representative Lindsay Sabadosa and Senator Jo Comerford.