



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Housing
In support of H.1305 An Act codifying the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program
And S.797 An Act relative to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports H.1305 and S.797 dealing with the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program, which provides vouchers to assist eligible low-income families with their rent. These bills improve the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) which, along with adequate funding through the budget process, is a critical part of meeting the needs of families experiencing homelessness by allowing them to move into suitable apartments as rapidly as possible.

The bills raise the fair market rent standard for vouchers, increase administrative fees, require inspections before occupancy and biennially, and improve data collection. These are improvements called for by the very tight housing market that makes it difficult to rehouse persons and families once they have entered the shelter system. The extreme housing challenge for Massachusetts residents was documented in a study by the National Low Income Housing Coalition ([Out of Reach: the High Cost of Housing 2018](#)) that found a single-income household would need to earn \$28.64 per hour or to work 95 hours a week at the \$12 minimum wage to afford rent on a two-bedroom housing unit. More than a quarter of renters in the state are paying more than 50% of their income on housing costs, so that any unexpected emergency may lead to homelessness.

The MVRP has been a successful program, and we believe it will be strengthened by placing it in the General Laws. The targeting of assistance to families with incomes under 80% of area median income and the provision that 75% of funds will go to families with incomes under 30% of area median income are sensible restrictions. It is important that the opportunity for data collection during administration of the program is implemented. Data should help make steady progress in determining “best practices” in our homelessness programs to counter the disappointing track record. The numbers represent very real human suffering and large state expenditures, so we should not be satisfied with the status quo.

The League urges the Joint Committee on Housing to report favorably on H.1305 and S.797 and work to see that these bills are passed this session.