



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Housing  
In support of H.1351 An Act codifying the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program  
(MRVP) and S.888 An Act relative to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)  
By Lucy Kennedy, LWVMA Affordable Housing Specialist  
September 27, 2023**

MRVP is an extremely important program that helps people with low incomes afford rent by covering a portion of their cost. According to the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), 10,000 households are helped annually. These bills would improve and stabilize the MVRP program, making it less subject to changes with each budget cycle. It is critically important that families with vouchers know they can depend on the MVRP program and count on the stability it provides. Families need to know that the share of their income for rent will be capped at 30% and that their unit will be inspected and kept habitable for them. H.1351 and S.888 would increase the administrative fee so that regional agencies and housing authorities can better cover the cost of the MVRP program and continue their sponsorship. These bills also improve data collection to give the legislature and administrative personnel information needed to evaluate and improve the MRVP program.

These identical bills codify the MRVP by placing it in General Law 121B (Public Housing), as a new section 61, for both mobile and project-based vouchers. The income ceiling is 80% of the area median income (AMI) and 75% of vouchers must go to households whose income is 30% of AMI or less. Rental payments cannot exceed 110% of market rent and those receiving tenant-based assistance shall not pay more than 30% of adjusted household income. Initial and biennial inspections for safety are required. Monthly administrative fees are capped and the Dept. of Housing and Community Development is charged with certain data reporting requirements.

The League of Women Voters supports affordable housing in order to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family. State and local governments should assist by establishing agencies to aid, promote, coordinate, and supplement the housing programs of the federal government and the private sector. Government at all levels must make sufficient funds available for housing assistance programs. When families or individuals cannot afford decent housing, the government should provide assistance in the form of income (should this be vouchers) and/or subsidized housing.

The Massachusetts League is made up of 44 local Leagues across the Commonwealth. LWVMA supports the MRVP program and the stabilizing changes made by H.1351 and S.888. We urge the Joint Committee on Housing to recommend passage of these bills and to follow the course to successful enactment during this 193<sup>rd</sup> session.