

December 21, 2016

Brian S. Dempsey, Chairman
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 01233

Chairman Dempsey:

We are writing to you today to respectfully ask that *H.1129, An Act providing a homeless bill of rights*, be favorably reported out of the House Committee on Ways and Means. It would be wonderful to see the Committee affirm that all citizens of the Commonwealth should have equal rights regardless of housing status in time for the holiday season.

This legislation would create a homeless bill of rights to ensure that people in Massachusetts are not mistreated or denied access to services based solely on their housing status. Included in the bill of rights is the right to use and move freely in public spaces, the right not to face discrimination while seeking or maintaining employment, and the right to vote, the right to register to vote and receive documentation necessary to prove identity for voting, and several other common-sense measures.

This bill would simply serve as a statement of legislative intent and would therefore incur no costs to the Commonwealth. The language was modeled after the law that was passed in Rhode Island in 2012, and since then, similar legislation protecting the rights of homeless persons has become law in Connecticut and Illinois.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Representative Smitty Pignatelli
Fourth Berkshire District