Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance's Press Release

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**WORCESTER STILL REMAINS OUT OF REACH FOR MANY**

**WORCESTER, MA** - Even with a boom in new housing developments in Worcester, Worcester and surrounding communities remain unaffordable for many families and individuals. The public health and economic crisis have disproportionately affected the lowest-wage workers and have exacerbated their housing instability. The shortage of affordable rental homes for low-income households in Worcester and surrounding communities is not new.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition recently released the [Annual 2022 Out of Reach Report](https://nlihc.org/oor/state/ma) in which a side-by-side comparison of wages and rent for Worcester and surrounding areas shows the amount of money a household must earn to afford a rental unit. For many Worcester households, affording rent means working multiple jobs or living in overcrowded conditions.

The 2022 Out of Reach study places Massachusetts as the third least affordable state in the nation for rental housing, demonstrating a widening gap between the wages of low- and moderate-income households and their housing costs. The lack of units that are affordable for those of the lowest income, not adjusting housing subsidies to reflect actual housing costs, and skyrocketing rents, have left renters struggling.  More households face high utility bills, food insecurity, displacement, and increasingly unaffordable rents leading to no-fault evictions and displacements. Particularly, renters in Black, Indigenous People of Color and low-wealth communities are facing a severe housing crisis.

[*The Out of Reach Report*](https://nlihc.org/oor/state/ma) *shows that Worcester continues to remain out of reach for many of these renters and essential workers. The Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom apartment is $1491. In order to afford this rent and utilities without paying more than 30% of their income, a household needs to earn $28.67 per hour. However, the average wage of renters in Worcester and surrounding areas is only $14.25 per hour. In order to afford a modest, two-bedroom apartment in Worcester at the minimum wage of $14.25, a renter would need to work 80 hours per week, 52 weeks per year.*

The report also highlights the wage inequality for essential workers, many of whom are squeezed tight by an unaffordable rental market and stagnant low-wages. The largest number of frontline workers work as Home Health and Personal Care Aids, making an hourly median wage of $18.46. Close behind them are retail salespersons whose median wage is $15.57 and fast food and counter workers making $15.36 an hour. A household earning these wages would not be able to afford a two-bedroom apartment in Worcester or surrounding towns without working multiple jobs.

We applaud the city administration for strengthening its efforts to rehabilitate multifamily units, address deferred maintenance costs for low-income landlords, support the creation and preservation of affordable housing through its ARPA funds, and create the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.  We also recognize that this is not enough.  "We know we need a multi-pronged approach to addressing this growing crisis.  It will take both keeping renters stably housed through rental assistance and tenant protection legislation, and increasing affordable housing units through production and other means for those at the lowest income who are at risk of or experiencing displacement and homelessness”, said Bradley, Executive Director of Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance