Taking a Closer Look at the Rise in Eviction Filings in Hampden County

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Massachusetts, often known for its rich history, prestigious universities, and picturesque landscapes has earned a new accolade: ranking among the top 10 states with the most expensive rent. In 2024, it took fifth place, with an average monthly rent of $1,851 for a two-bedroom home.

Less than a two-hour drive from Boston lies Hampden County, home to less than one percent of the state’s population. In recent years, Hampden County has led the state in eviction filings, with an average of 26.41 filings per one thousand renter households, compared to the statewide average of 17.39 filings, according to the Massachusetts Housing Partnership.

A closer look at evictions issued by the Massachusetts Trial Court on residential eviction cases reveals a 579-file increase in non-payment filings from 2022 to 2023 in Hampden County. Outnumbering its neighboring county, Hampshire County, by more than nine hundred filings in 2023 and 2024. Evictions, often associated with economic hardship, result from a complex series of laws and processes. This is certainly the case in Hampden County, where eviction filing rates are rising, driven by factors beyond just high rent prices.

Hampden County experienced a jump in eviction rate filings due non-payments from 426 in 2022 to more than a thousand in 2023. This jump in eviction rate filings in part has been credited to the end of the federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), which stopped accepting new applications on April 15, 2022. The ERAP aimed at supporting renters who were facing eviction during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time in which Massachusetts struggled immensely with the housing crisis. With the end of ERAP, Massachusetts was left with its own state-funded residential assistance program, the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition.

The RAFT program aims to provide families with funds to help retain housing, seek new housing, and ultimately prevent homelessness. Currently, it provides families, who undergo a lengthy application process, with up to $7,000 per twelve-month period. The application process can take several weeks and funds are not guaranteed, according to the Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance. Leaving families to look for other resources that often have waitlists in the hundreds, and with no guarantee of obtaining help.

So far this year, Hampden County makes up for nearly 14% of the total eviction filings due to non-payment of rent in the state. With the predicted rise in the cost of living in Massachusetts, and the numerous programs that are struggling to keep up with the housing crisis, the number of eviction filings in Hampden County does not look to be decreasing anytime soon. If rental assistance programs are not proving to be enough to minimize the number of eviction filings, then it seemingly is time for Massachusetts to begin looking elsewhere to combat this issue.