

Understanding the Passage and Expiration of Massachusetts'  
Unprecedented Statewide Eviction Moratorium

A thesis submitted by

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## **Abstract**

In April 2020, Massachusetts passed an unprecedented eviction moratorium which lasted for six months. In this thesis, I use a case study approach and semi-structured interviews to study how this policy change quickly occurred and why it did not endure. I use the advocacy coalition framework and social construction of target populations to explain that the shift occurred because a socially-motivated advocacy coalition and a market-motivated advocacy coalition aligned in their beliefs in public health and who deserves help. I also show that the moratorium failed to last for external factors, including legal decisions and federal policy, and because it was replaced by a new policy that better reflected how society views tenants at risk of eviction. This work shows that policy advocates may have more success if they identify and make use of shared beliefs with their opponents; keep lines of communication open; and include grassroots organizations in decision-making.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In March 2020 and the months that followed, the U.S. federal government, most state governments, and some local governments issued a wave of unprecedented moratoriums on eviction in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures were aimed at preventing the public health risk posed by forcing people out of their homes and into crowded shelters or doubled-up living situations, particularly given that so many residents had lost income due to business closures in response to the pandemic. Eviction moratoriums are new for the U.S. and their enactment represents a shift in U.S. housing policy. In 2019, the year before the pandemic arrived in the U.S., the idea of suspending almost all evictions would have sounded radical, even unthinkable. Historically, the U.S. government has favored homeowners over renters. However, this is not for lack of previous efforts by housing advocates to improve tenant rights. Housing advocates have been pushing the federal, state, and local governments for years to take eviction seriously. Although advocates have made small gains in some cities, there has not been a recent, widespread, abrupt shift in legal protections for tenants like the one that occurred, even if temporarily, during the pandemic. This thesis uses a framework drawn from two theories of the public policy process, the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) and the social construction of target populations (SCTP), to understand how this abrupt policy shift came about in Massachusetts and why it did not last. It uses a case study approach and qualitative research through semi-structured interviews to understand the process of how the eviction moratorium was passed in Massachusetts in April 2020, why it was extended, and why it ended in October 2020, even as the pandemic continued. Studying this can illuminate the advocacy strategies that were effective and those that were not. Policy advocates can then apply these findings to future struggles for housing justice and other causes.



Many renters across the U.S. were already struggling to afford rent before the pandemic (Dougherty, 2020; Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2020). The pandemic exacerbated this because so many industries were forced to lay off or furlough employees. A sharp increase in unemployment at the beginning of the pandemic, around April 2020, meant that many tenants lost income and found themselves unable to cover the rent. Eviction causes long-term negative effects in people's lives, such as adverse health outcomes (Desmond & Kimbro, 2015; Kushel et al., 2006). The pandemic added another layer of public health risk to evictions because evicted tenants would move into group settings, either to a homeless shelter or with friends or family, potentially creating additional spread of the virus. In response to this dilemma, 43 states issued some form of a moratorium on evictions (Raifman et al., 2020). Congress authorized funding for rental assistance, supplemental unemployment benefits, and stimulus checks for those eligible. In September 2020, the federal government issued its own eviction moratorium. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government had only ever issued moratoriums on foreclosures; there is no evidence of eviction moratoriums existing in the U.S. before the pandemic.

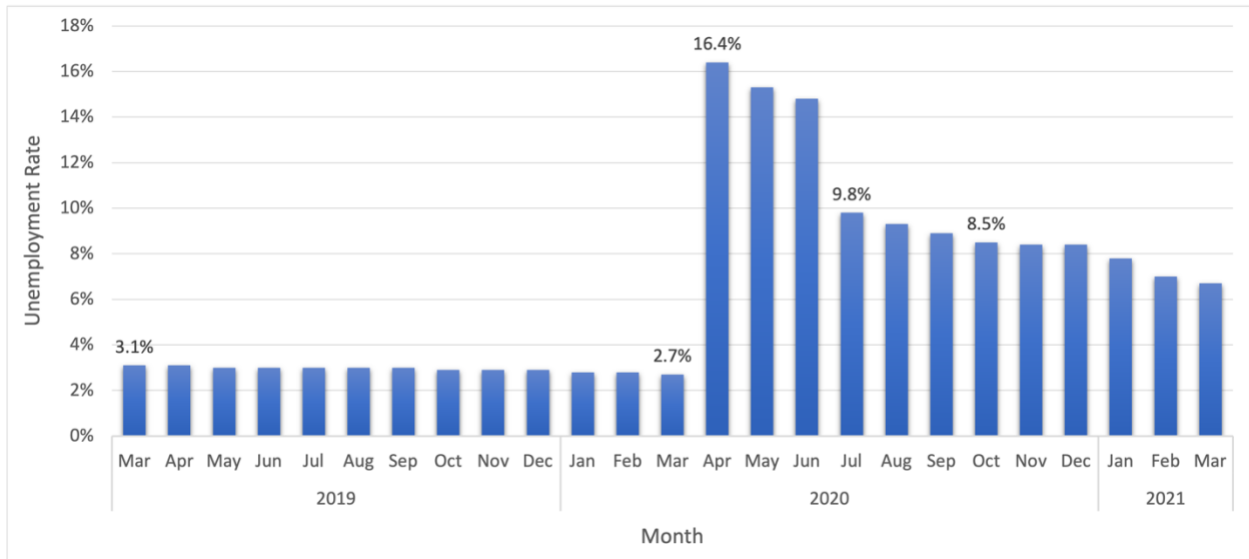
### **Massachusetts Case Context**

In Massachusetts, 62.4% of units are owner-occupied, meaning about one-third are renter-occupied. This is different in the larger cities such as the capital city Boston, where only 35% of units are owner-occupied (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). In order to evict a tenant in Massachusetts, a landlord must follow a series of steps. First, they must give the tenant a notice to quit. If the tenant does not leave in the time frame indicated on the notice to quit, then the landlord must file a court case, called a summary process. The tenant is given a certain amount of time to respond before the case is filed with the court. If the court decides the landlord can evict the tenant, they issue a court order called an execution. At that point, the landlord can hire a

sheriff or constable to move the tenant(s) out of the property; the landlord is not allowed to remove the tenant (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2021).

**Figure 1**

*Sharp Rise in Massachusetts' Unemployment Rate in April 2021 (March 2019 – March 2021)*



*Note.* Data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2021); graph created by author.

From March to April 2020, unemployment in Massachusetts jumped dramatically, as seen in Figure 1. On April 20, 2020, about a month after businesses and activities began to shut down in Massachusetts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker signed into law An Act Providing for a Moratorium on Evictions and Foreclosures During the COVID-19 Emergency (2020) that stopped nearly all eviction and foreclosures in the state for four months or until 45 days after the state of emergency was lifted, whichever was sooner. The law stipulated that the only exceptions to the eviction moratorium were for cases where the tenant posed a health or safety risk to others (Logan, 2020b). Furthermore, neither landlords nor courts could initiate or process an eviction at any stage of the eviction process. Moreover, landlords were not allowed to charge late fees if the tenant could show that their non-payment was due to financial hardship from COVID-19. Finally, they were forbidden from sending any

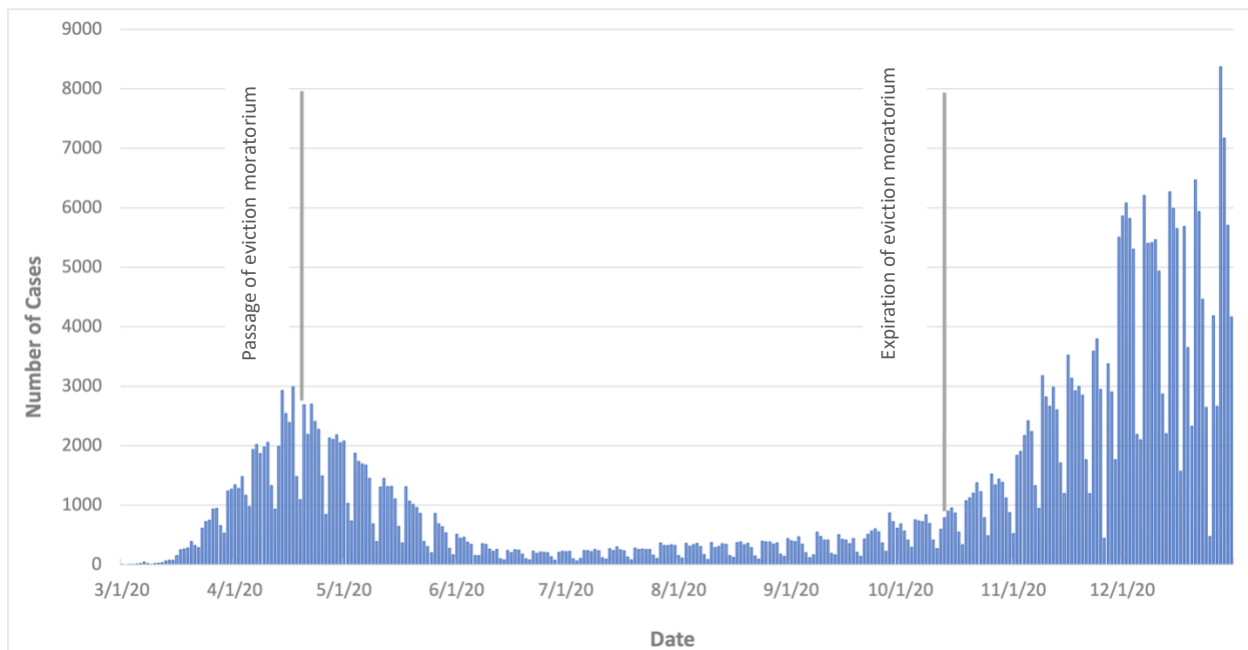
notice to tenants asking or demanding them to leave the premises. It did not relieve tenants of the obligation to pay rent, however. As part of the law, people with mortgages received forbearance if they attested that they had experienced financial hardship due to COVID-19; they also were not relieved of the obligation to pay the mortgage. The Massachusetts eviction moratorium was broader than the federal moratorium, which came later, because unlike the federal moratorium, it did not require the tenant to sign a letter and explicitly prevented landlords from initiating nonpayment-of-rent-related evictions.

The act gave the governor the power to extend the moratorium in increments of up to 90 days, as long as the new expiration date was not more than 45 days after the state of emergency lifted (An Act Providing for a Moratorium on Evictions and Foreclosures During the COVID-19 Emergency, 2020). In July 2020, Governor Baker extended the moratorium until October 17, 2020. Though he had the authority to extend it again, he let it expire in October, and instead launched a \$171 million Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI) to provide funds for eligible tenants and homeowners (DeCosta-Klipa, 2020b). A bill sponsored by progressive Representative Mike Connolly, which would have implemented a moratorium on evictions for a year after the state of emergency, did not advance beyond receiving a favorable report-out from a committee, so it did not receive a vote in the legislature (DeCosta-Klipa, 2020b).

Understanding the context of COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts is important to understanding the eviction moratorium. In late March into early April of 2020, there was an outbreak of COVID-19 cases in a homeless shelter in Boston with a 36% positivity rate (Baggett et al., 2020). Figure 2 shows that COVID-19 cases in MA started to fall after the eviction moratorium was implemented, and rose after it expired. Of course, that does not imply causation; there were many other factors at the times that could have caused case numbers to rise and fall.

**Figure 2**

*Massachusetts COVID-19 Cases by Test Date, March 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020*



*Note:* Data from Massachusetts Department of Public Health (2021); graph created by author.

## Objectives

In this thesis I rely on two theories—advocacy coalition framework and social construction of target populations—to explain why Massachusetts was able to shift its housing policy and enact a statewide eviction moratorium, and why the policy did not last, since the moratorium was in place for only six months while the pandemic and pandemic-induced unemployment continued. In fact, the October 2020 unemployment rate was more than two-and-a-half times that of the pre-pandemic statewide unemployment rate. I was motivated to study this topic because first, I wanted to understand how a policy that had never been implemented before came into being so quickly, and wanted to determine whether there were any other contextual factors besides the pandemic that could explain the rapid policy shift. Second, I wanted to understand why a statewide eviction moratorium, a policy I assumed would be championed by progressives, did not last long in a state that elects progressives to federal office.

I used a case study methodology and collected data through interviews with individuals involved in advocacy around the eviction moratorium. Because I study only one place in this thesis, I do not attempt to establish generalizable knowledge. I used the thesis as an exercise in applying the theories of policy change to a relevant case in order to contribute to the scholarship on the process of policy change. I assessed the advocacy coalitions and social context present to better understand how the eviction moratorium got passed and yet did not last. The results of this thesis will equip future policy advocates with best practices for achieving their desired policy goals. Should other scholars conduct similar case studies in different states, the thesis could potentially be used as reference for comparative study.

### **Scope**

In this thesis I focus on the process of policy change; specifically, I study how a new policy—a statewide eviction moratorium in Massachusetts—was advocated for, implemented, extended, and ultimately ended six months after its initial passage. The time frame I selected for the research is from March 2020 through October 2020. In this thesis, I attempt to explain why the policy shift occurred both when it was passed and when it ended. I do not debate the merits or effectiveness of the policy. I also do not cover other forms of housing policy that were implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as emergency rental assistance or moratoriums on foreclosures. Both of those tools had been employed before in the United States. Rather, in this thesis, I am interested in understanding how a completely new housing policy was able to be implemented in such a short time frame, and why it was not successful in continuing.

## Research Questions

Two central questions guided my research for this thesis:

- How do state-wide political and coalition forces explain the passage of an eviction moratorium in MA in April 2020 and its subsequent expiration in October 2020?
- What can we learn from the failure of the pro-moratorium coalition to extend the moratorium to inform future housing justice advocates' work?

The following sub-questions guided my research to answer the central questions:

- Who are these coalitions made up of?
- What are their belief systems and did they change at all after the pandemic?
- Were there any long-term changes to these coalitions taking place before the pandemic?
- What were the coalitions' motivations (political, economic) for advocating either pro- or anti-moratorium?
- What strategies did the coalitions use to advocate for their position and bring it to the attention of decision-makers? What made them successful or not?
- Why was an extension of the moratorium not championed by the Democratic legislature and in particular the Democratic House Speaker?

## Hypothesis

Below is the hypothesis I formed after reviewing the literature but before conducting any interviews:

The pandemic alone does not explain the policy change of the implementation of and subsequent expiration of the eviction moratorium in MA. It can also be explained by one or more of the following: a long-term shift in the movement for tenants' rights (e.g., increased political strength of the advocacy coalition), a change in the pro-moratorium and anti-moratorium coalitions' belief systems, the composition of the coalitions themselves, or the strategies they used.

## Thesis Structure

The chapters that follow explain the methods selection, findings, analysis, and what can be learned from the results. Chapter One introduced the case and problem, and presented initial

research questions and pre-interview hypotheses used to develop interview guides. Chapter Two reviews literature on evictions and eviction moratoriums in the U.S. to show why this policy is important to study and how the MA case fits into a national context. It also reviews relevant theories of policy change which I used to guide my approach and analysis. Chapter Three introduces the methodology used, including a case study approach, selection of the advocacy coalition framework and social construction of target populations as frameworks, and semi-structured interviews with nine interviewees. Chapter Four lays out the findings from the interviews, identifying the advocacy coalition actors and describing the process of how the policy was passed and events leading up to its expiration. Chapter Five analyzes the findings to explain why the policy change occurred so quickly, why it did not endure, and what the interviews revealed about the belief systems of each advocacy coalition and the social constructions of landlords and tenants at risk of eviction. Chapter Six discusses how said analysis of belief systems and social constructions further explains the policy passage and expiration, and also identifies limitations of the research. Finally, Chapter Seven summarizes the major findings, provides recommendations for creating impactful policy change, and offers suggestions for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review of Evictions, Eviction Moratoriums, and Policy Change**

### **Evictions and Eviction Moratoriums in the U.S.**

Between April 1 and April 5, 2020, 31% of U.S. renters did not pay their rent, up from 18% the previous year (Dougherty, 2020). By August 2020, 30-40 million people in the United States, about 10% of the population, were estimated to be at risk of eviction in the following months absent further federal, state, or local protections (Benfer et al., 2020; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). This threat of eviction existed because of the COVID-19 pandemic that took hold in the U.S. in March of 2020 and resulted in substantial job losses across the country. The national unemployment rate rose from 3.8% in February 2020 to 14.4% in April (Kochhar, 2020). While it has steadily declined since then—it was down to 6.7% in November 2020—it is still higher than before the pandemic (BLS, 2020). This high unemployment rate meant that millions of people lost their primary sources of income, making it harder for them to pay rent, especially if they did not have the savings to cover it. Renters tend to have lower incomes, smaller savings, and less access to credit than homeowners (Choi et al., 2020), making them more vulnerable to the effects of unemployment, since they are less likely to have rainy day funds or be able to cover expenses with a loan or credit card. These are some reasons the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed so many people to the brink of eviction.

Eviction was already a problem in the U.S. prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2016, an estimated 2.3 million evictions were filed in the U.S. (Gross, 2018). In the two years leading up to the pandemic, it was well reported in national media that 40% of Americans could not afford an unexpected expense of \$400, a statistic that comes from the Federal Reserve (2018). And, in 2018, one-quarter of all renter households in the U.S. were severely cost-burdened, meaning they spent more than 50% of their household income on rent (Joint Center for Housing Studies,



2020). These numbers explain why it would be difficult for many renters who lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to be able to continue to pay rent without additional support.

This is a problem because eviction can not only lead to homelessness but is also correlated with both short- and long-term negative health outcomes and disproportionately impacts women and people of color. In general, eviction disrupts and destabilizes lives: evicted tenants may go into a shelter, stay with friends or relatives, or spend time searching for a new home. Children whose families are evicted and have to move may need to change schools in the middle of the year. Mothers who underwent an eviction within the last year were more likely to report depression and worse health for themselves and their children (Desmond & Kimbro, 2015). Housing instability more generally, which includes eviction, frequent moves, or simply being behind on rent, has been associated with postponed medical care and increased hospitalizations (Kushel et al., 2006). Eviction tends to disproportionately affect people of color, women, and low-income individuals (Hartman & Robinson, 2003). In Milwaukee, for example, women from black neighborhoods made up only 9% of the population, yet they accounted for 30% of evictions (Desmond, 2016).

In the context of COVID-19, eviction also has public health consequences. Most evicted households end up moving in with friends or family, also known as doubling up (Nande et al., 2021). This has public health implications because at least 20-50% of COVID-19 infections are the result of a household contact (Nande et al., 2021). When a household size increases due to a newly evicted family moving in, it can be assumed that the risk of household transmission increases. Even when not doubling up, evicted individuals and households may go to a homeless shelter, which, given their nature as group living situations, are an infection risk. At the beginning of the pandemic, there were multiple outbreaks in homeless shelters (Baggett et al.,

2020; Dillon & Dolan, 2020). Recent research, pending peer review, has shown that the lifting of eviction moratoriums by states has resulted in 433,700 excess cases of COVID-19 and 10,700 excess deaths (Leifheit et al., 2020).

The federal government stepped in during the pandemic to protect against evictions, as did most state governments and some local governments. Governments at many levels have responded by offering protections for tenants in the form of moratoriums on eviction and emergency rental assistance. An eviction moratorium typically means that evictions for non-payment of rent cannot be processed until the expiration of the moratorium, though the exact rules vary by place. However, the tenant is still responsible for the back rent. Many state and local governments have also taken action around eviction prevention. Forty-three states issued at least some form of an eviction moratorium in response to the pandemic; only seven states never issued one (Raifman et al., 2020). Many state moratoriums provided more protections to renters than the federal moratorium that came later. Some individual cities across the country also implemented their own eviction moratoriums, some of which offered broader protections than their state's or federal government's moratorium did (Eviction Lab, 2020a). For example, the city of Somerville, MA has a moratorium on evictions in place through April 30, 2022. This particular moratorium allows landlords to start the process of eviction but bans the enforcement of evictions until after the moratorium expiration date (City of Somerville, 2021).

The federal government also enacted eviction moratoriums. First, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, signed into law in March 2020, prevented evictions from occurring in properties receiving federal assistance or with federally-backed financing between March 27, 2020 and July 24, 2020. This covered an estimated 28-46% of all occupied rental properties (McCarty & Perl, 2021). Then, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

issued a ban on eligible evictions starting September 4, 2020, through December 31, 2020 (CDC, 2020). To be covered by the moratorium, tenants were required to submit a signed document to their landlord affirming that they were unable to pay rent as a result of a loss of income or extraordinary out-of-pocket medical expenses, that they had already attempted to get government assistance, and that they were making a best effort to pay as much of the rent as they could (CDC, 2020). The CDC's unclear policy guidance meant that some landlords interpreted the rule to mean that they could still initiate the eviction process, even if they could not physically evict someone until after the moratorium expired (Romm, 2020). The federal eviction moratorium did not exempt renters from owing back rent or late fees. That this ruling came from the CDC, and not the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), signaled that the federal government viewed evictions as a public health threat as opposed to a housing crisis.

Immediately after the moratorium's enactment in 2020, landlords and housing industry groups filed a number of lawsuits in federal, state, and local courts (Romm, 2020). The CDC moratorium was extended until January 31, 2021 as part of the \$900 billion stimulus bill signed into law in December 2020 (Montague, 2020). President Biden then extended it again through March, June, and July of 2021. It expired on July 31, 2021. On August 3, 2021, the CDC issued a new eviction moratorium good through October 3, 2021 which only covered renters living in communities experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases, which at that time applied to approximately 90% of all renters (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2021).

An eviction moratorium was not the only tool the federal government used to provide housing assistance during the pandemic. Federal assistance also included foreclosure protections for homeowners whose mortgages were backed by the Federal Home Administration (FHA) (Montague, 2020). The CARES Act allocated money that state and local governments could

apply for and use to provide emergency rental assistance (CARES Act, 2020). As of October 2020, 438 rental assistance programs had been created across the country by state and local governments; \$2.9 billion of their total \$3.9 billion of funding came from the CARES Act (Yae et al., 2020). However, as of October 2020, 30% of those programs had already closed (Yae et al., 2020). The CARES Act also provided an additional \$600 per week for those on unemployment and sent stimulus checks to those making under \$99,000 per year (CARES Act, 2020). Supplemental unemployment benefits from the CARES Act expired in July 2020, but an executive action in August 2020 by then-President Trump provided an additional \$300 per week in unemployment benefits, to which states could add an additional \$100 per week, but the program only lasted six weeks (Stein & Rosenberg, 2020). While those supplemental unemployment benefits were not specifically targeted to renters, those who had lost their jobs and were eligible for the federal assistance were able to use it to help cover their rent payments.

The adoption of eviction moratoriums is unprecedented in the U.S. I could not find any evidence of eviction moratoriums in the U.S. before the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 1918 flu pandemic, there were widespread rent strikes in New York City, but no evidence of eviction moratoriums. During the Great Depression, relief organizations in cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, and New York adopted a “no-rent” policy in which they refused to distribute relief funds to pay for rent unless the tenant was indeed on the brink of eviction; instead, they spent their limited funds on food and other necessities (Abbott & Kiesling, 1935). In these cases, the relief organizations acted as a coalition standing up to landlords. However, they were not a result of governmental action but rather a decision made by charitable organizations. On the other hand, the provision of emergency rental assistance is not unprecedented. In response to the Great Recession, the American Recovery and Reinvestment

Act (ARRA) of 2009 provided \$1.5 billion for rental assistance to prevent homelessness (ARRA, 2009).

While moratoriums on eviction have no precedent in the U.S., moratoriums on foreclosures do. Moratoriums on foreclosures, which benefit homeowners and landlords, have been enacted before in response to disaster. They were enacted by many states during the Great Depression (Wheelock, 2008) and by California during the Great Recession (CBS News, 2009). HUD provided a moratorium on foreclosures for FHA-insured mortgages after Hurricane Katrina in 2007 (McCarthy, 2008) and after Hurricane Maria in 2017 (HUD, 2018). This is not surprising, given that U.S. housing policy has historically favored homeowners over renters, as evidenced by priorities in the federal budget. For example, in 2012, seven million low-income renters received federal housing subsidies, whereas over 34 million homeowners benefited from the mortgage-interest tax deduction (Schwartz, 2015).

The lack of precedent for eviction moratoriums in the U.S. is not for lack of trying on the part of advocates to expand eviction protections. While those in power are now paying more attention to the topic of eviction, housing advocates have been pushing for increased housing affordability and protections for renters for years. In particular, Matthew Desmond's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Evicted*, published in 2016, brought national attention to the issue of eviction, and the creation of his website The Eviction Lab provided advocates with data they had not had access to before (Gambini, 2020). In recent years, some cities, including New York, San Francisco, and Philadelphia, have passed measures to offer free legal counsel for eligible tenants being evicted (Capps, 2019). However, there has not been a recent, nation-wide movement towards greater protections for renters at the same scale as we have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Policy Change Frameworks**

Since the 1950s, researchers in the field of political science, and its subfield of public policy, have developed a number of theories, or research tools that define scope, to attempt to explain how and why policy change occurs (Weible, 2018). These theories provide a shared language for researchers, which allows for comparative studies and the accumulation of knowledge. Weible (2018) defines public policy as “the deliberate decisions—actions and nonactions—of a government or an equivalent authority toward specific objectives” (p. 2). In the case of Massachusetts, therefore, the nonactions, such as the expiration of the eviction moratorium, are also a part of the policy process.

In this section, I review the theories of policy change that are most relevant to the case of the eviction moratorium in MA. I describe each framework and discuss their applications in the literature, particularly as related to housing policy or post-disaster policy change. I also discuss why they are a compatible tool to use with the case study of this thesis. While many different established theories are actively used in the research community, there are too many to describe in detail in this literature review. More detailed descriptions of theories that I considered using, but did not select for the case study, are in Appendix A.

### ***Advocacy Coalition Framework***

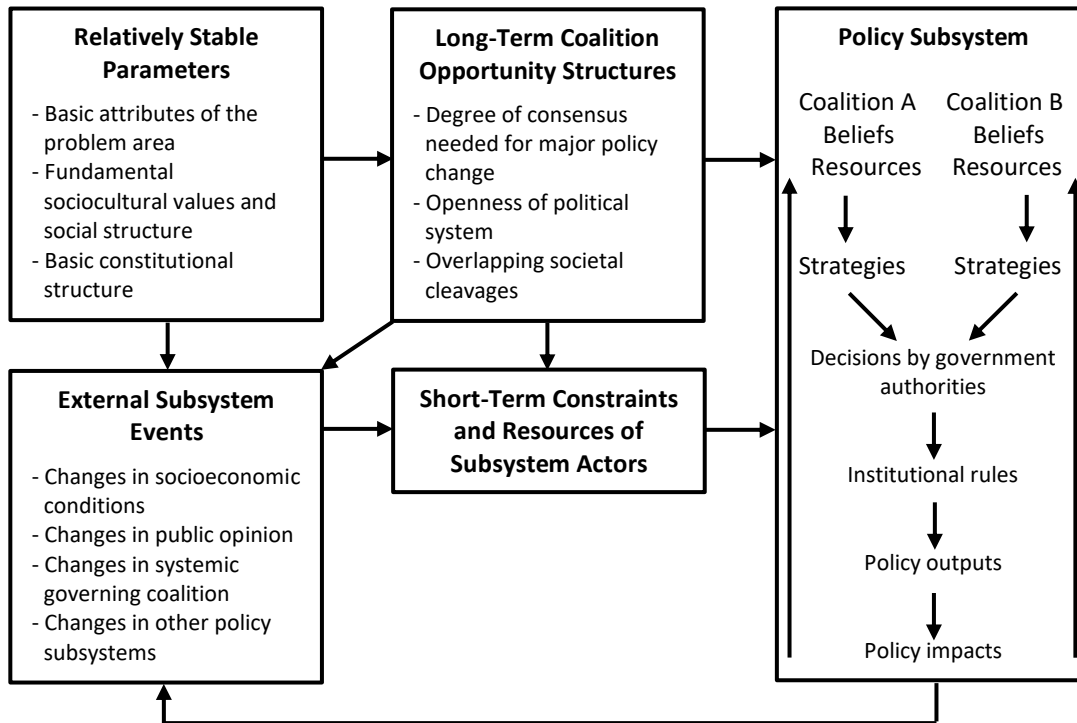
The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) approaches policy change through the lens of belief systems. It was developed in the early 1980s and studies policy over periods of a decade or more (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). It posits that its so-called advocacy coalitions are united by actors with shared belief systems, or values and perceptions of a policy, who work to influence a policy subsystem. A policy subsystem includes actors working directly or indirectly to influence a certain policy topic (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). These actors can include non-profit

organizations, academics, think tanks, government officials, journalists, interest groups, or lobbyists (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). The ACF assumes that because humans are motivated by their goals but limited in their ability to process information, they therefore process the information through the biased lens of their belief system (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). Sabatier (1988), one of the founders of the theory, argues that policy change is brought about by both learning and by real-world changes, like a presidential election. He argues that changes in policy can come from external factors which are either stable (meaning they take decades to change; examples include legal structure or cultural values) or dynamic (meaning they can change in less than 10 years; examples include new technology or socioeconomic conditions). The full theory of policy change according to the ACF is depicted in Figure 3. The ACF hypothesizes that external changes (like a pandemic) in a policy subsystem are “necessary, but not sufficient” to explain major policy change (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). As seen in Figure 3, change can come about from either external events or from long-term changes. The diagram also shows that each advocacy coalition in the policy subsystem strategizes on how to push for their beliefs and get their plan in front of government authorities, who make the final decision on implementing the policy.

The ACF conducts its analysis of the policy process through the study of advocacy coalitions for simplification. Studying all of the different individuals or unique organizations involved in influencing a policy would simply be too much to manage for a researcher (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). The theory tells researchers to employ a long-term time perspective to understand policy change, but Jenkins-Smith et al. (2018) say that the long timeframe should not be a barrier to applying it to a case. They simply want to acknowledge that the behavior of actors and the pattern of policy change can only be understood through time. The authors say that the

**Figure 3**

*The Advocacy Coalition Framework Flow Diagram*



*Note.* Adapted from Jenkins-Smith et al. (2018).

ACF is most useful for researchers who have questions about coalitions, learning, and policy change, and in cases that are a high-conflict situation and using the subsystem level of analysis.

The ACF is useful for either case studies or comparative analyses and has been applied to cases in different countries (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). Authors have applied the ACF to post-disaster scenarios, like post-Chernobyl (Nohrstedt, 2008), post-2010 volcanic ash cloud in Europe (Nohrstedt, 2013), and post-flood (Albright, 2011) so there is precedent for using this framework to understand policy change (or lack thereof) in the wake of disasters.

Because the ACF works well with case studies and has been used to study disaster response, it is good fit for this case study. It is also easy to use the concept of advocacy coalitions in this case study. In the case of eviction moratoriums in MA, I hypothesized (before conducting



interviews) that the two advocacy coalitions would be a pro-moratorium coalition and an anti-moratorium coalition. The ACF is also applicable to this case in that it hypothesizes that short-term changes can provide short-term opportunities for the advocacy coalitions to take advantage of (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018), which means that it has a way to study short-term, sudden events like the pandemic that opened an opportunity for legislation. Even though the ACF calls for a study of 10 years or more, it is still a good fit for this case study because I can consider prior housing advocacy in MA. The ACF is also able to study the network of non-profits in MA because it includes non-profit actors in its policy subsystems. Another benefit to the ACF is that it considers the role of scientific information in belief systems (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018), which is particularly applicable in this case given the role of the pandemic. The ACF also considers the role of changing socioeconomic circumstances in policy change, which is certainly something that took place during the pandemic. One criticism of ACF is that in emphasizing the role of beliefs in the policy subsystems, it undervalues the role that self-interest plays in policymaking (Grossman, 2019; Norhstedt, 2005).

### ***Social Construction of Target Populations***

Missing from the ACF is a way to consider differences in how the primary people affected by the eviction moratorium policy—renters and tenants—are framed. There is an inherent power imbalance in the tenant-landlord relationship. The social construction of target populations (SCTP) theory does consider how these representations impact policy change. Schneider and Ingram (1993), who developed the theory, define the social construction of target populations as “the cultural characterizations or popular images of the persons or groups whose behavior and well-being are affected by public policy” (p. 334). They theorize that this social construction, which can be either positive or negative, influences public officials and thereby

contributes to the formation and design of policy (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). They say that policymakers offer policies that benefit the positively-framed groups and conversely are pressured to provide punitive policies for the negatively-portrayed groups. This dynamic is represented in a 4-by-4 matrix, Figure 4, that mixes power (weak or strong) with the social constructions (positive or negative) to predict how a policymaker will act with regards to a group. In this matrix, dependent groups (those that are low in power but constructed positively) typically receive policy that is beneficial to them but that still requires a complex eligibility process to obtain their benefits (Schneider & Ingram, 1993).

**Figure 4**

*Social Constructions and Political Power: Types of Target Populations*

		<b>Constructions</b>	
		<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Power</b>	<b>Strong</b>	<i><b>Advantaged</b></i> The elderly Business Veterans	<i><b>Contenders</b></i> The rich Big unions Minorities
	<b>Weak</b>	<i><b>Dependents</b></i> Children Mothers Disabled	<i><b>Deviants</b></i> Criminals Drug addicts Communists

*Note.* Adapted from Schneider & Ingram (1993).

Though Ingram and Schneider’s 1993 article was written nearly three decades ago, there were 111 empirical applications of the theory between 1993-2013 (Pierce et al., 2014). Data on the social construction of target populations can be collected empirically, making it suited for a case study (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). It can include textual evidence from legislation, speeches, and media coverage, or interviews or surveys of policymakers, journalists, the general public, or members of the target population (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). Pierce et al. (2014)

found that 27% of applications were both qualitative and empirical, in that they gathered primary or secondary data such as interviews, participant observation, and content analysis. 38% of the authors used the theory in conjunction with other theories (Pierce et al., 2014).

In practice, the social construction of target populations has been used to study policy creation at the state level. For example, Barney (2020) used the theory to understand the passage of an HIV policy passed in Louisiana in the 1980s. She placed the major groups impacted by the policy into Schneider and Ingram's quadrant and explained how the social construction of each of these groups informed policymakers' policy rationales (Barney, 2020)..

The theory has also been used in the realm of housing policy. For example, Erler (2012) showed that the social construction of the homeless changed during the Great Recession by analyzing articles on domestic poverty from three major U.S. newspapers during a stated time frame. Colburn (2014) built on Erler's work to explicitly tie that change in social construction to the shift in housing policy that occurred after the Great Recession. Additionally, in 1999, Hunter and Nixon studied the social construction of landlords, lenders, borrowers, and tenants in the United Kingdom. However, they offered a caution on employing the social construction theory: they were unable to place tenants, one of the core groups they were studying, into the quadrant (Hunter & Nixon, 1999). They also found it hard to link the policy discourse they studied to the policymaking, as groups who were impacted by the policy were not included in politicians' discourse (Hunter & Nixon, 1999).

The social construction of target populations theory is a good fit for the case study in this thesis. It addresses the influence that representations of landlords and those at risk for eviction have on policy decisions. It uses a qualitative methodology which fits with a case study approach.

## *Literature on Disasters*

Since the COVID-19 pandemic could be seen as a disaster or catastrophic event, it is important to review how scholars have employed theories of policy change to study disaster response. For example, Birkland (2006) studied policy change that occurred after disasters like 9/11, earthquakes, and hurricanes. He pulled concepts from different theories, including ACF and multiple streams framework (MSF), as they were helpful to explaining each policy shift. When examining the shift in federal homeland security policy after 9/11, he made a compelling argument that rapid policy change is the result of both the magnitude of the event and the availability of pre-existing policy options. For example, after 9/11, Birkland (2006) says that policymakers used reports that had been written before the attacks to inform their new policy. The existence of these ready-to-go policy ideas are similar to the ACF's policy subsystems, in which actors work behind the scenes to develop policy solutions for issues they care about.

To round out this literature review, I considered whether less formally academics writers could offer insight into analysis of post-disaster policy change. Author Naomi Klein has written extensively about policy change in the wake of disasters. However, she looks at it through the lens of capitalism, arguing that after major disruptive events, or shocks, conservatives swoop in to push forward policy that advances their pro-corporate goals, often at the expense of the poor, which she terms disaster capitalism. She gives the example of military contractors in New Orleans profiting after Hurricane Katrina (Klein, 2017). Indeed, in a May 2020 issue of the *Radical Housing Journal*, the editorial collective cautioned that a disaster capitalism response could occur as a response to the eviction crisis (Vilenica et al., 2020). However, like Birkland, Klein believes in the power of having existing policy solutions at the ready for when disasters strike so that progressives as well as conservatives can advance their ideals.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Case Study**

In order to gain an understanding of the actors involved in the passage and expiration of the eviction moratorium, their motivations, and the barriers they faced, I used a case study approach. Case studies are suited for research where the phenomenon being studied cannot be separated from its context (Yin, 1981). The context of the pandemic and the unique political landscape in Massachusetts is necessary to understand the phenomenon of the passage and subsequent expiration of the statewide eviction moratorium. Additionally, case studies are able to explore multiple variables within a situation, of which there are many in this case, given the number of players involved in the passage and expiration of the moratorium. I limited the timeframe of the case to March 2020 through October 2020, the initiation of moratorium through its expiration.

### **Selection of Framework**

First, I conducted a literature review of frameworks and theories that scholars use to understand policy change. Scholars typically opt to apply one or two theories of policy change to their research. Weible (2018) recommends using two or more theories to study a policy process since he argues that one theory only provides a partial view. There were numerous examples in the literature of scholars who have expertly woven two theories together (Beard, 2013; Colburn, 2014; Yerena, 2019). I therefore selected two theories that best applied to my case to guide me in answering my research questions. I chose the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) and the social construction of target populations (SCTP) because they are both easy to understand and well-suited to case studies and qualitative analysis. The ACF is the more robust of the two for my purposes, but I added the SCTP to fill in any gaps in explaining the policy shift that the ACF

missed. The literature review also demonstrated that both frameworks covered many of the contextual elements I wanted to consider in this case study. For example, Heikkila and Cairney (2018) show that the ACF is able to consider the role of events. SCTP is able to consider the power dynamic between tenants and landlords through its social constructions and political power matrix. The ACF is appropriate for considering the role of social movements, existing activism, wider context, and the role of new scientific information in explaining policy change. Finally, both frameworks have been used in studies of policy at the state level.

Since the ACF considers policy subsystems to be the primary unit of analysis for understanding policy change, I focused my research on the housing policy subsystem in Massachusetts. Before I began my research, I hypothesized that there were two advocacy coalitions involved in the policy debate around the statewide eviction moratorium: a pro-moratorium coalition and an anti-moratorium coalition. I reviewed news articles to compose an initial list of actors and stakeholders that I believed to be a part of each advocacy coalition. In the pro-moratorium coalition I listed tenants, housing advocates, advocates for the poor, local housing justice groups, national housing justice groups, select think tanks, and progressive Democratic state legislators. In the anti-moratorium coalition I listed landlords, homeowners, business interests, banks and lenders, the real estate industry, developers, Republicans and conservatives, and more moderate to conservative Democratic state legislators.

## **Interviews**

I took a qualitative approach to answering my research questions by conducting semi-structured interviews with the individuals and representatives of organizations in the two advocacy coalitions I identified. Table 1 list everyone I interviewed and their affiliations. Before conducting any interviews, I submitted a protocol to Tufts' Social, Behavioral, and Educational

Research Institutional Review Board (IRB) office. My research was approved as exempt from IRB review. I also received approval from Tufts' Integrative Safety Committee, which reviews all COVID-19-related research at Tufts. I decided not to interview individual tenants and landlords impacted by the moratorium because Jenkins-Smith et al. (2018) do not consider all people impacted by a policy to be a part of that policy subsystem. Additionally, they may be considered a "Special Population" by the IRB, which would have made them subject to additional review, which might have delayed the timeline for this thesis.

I gathered a list of contact information from websites for the people and organizations on my list of the two advocacy coalitions. I emailed them using my IRB-approved recruitment email (see Appendix B), which I tailored to each individual. I used a snowball sampling method to expand my initial list of contacts; I asked every person I interviewed whether there was anyone else I should speak with. In total I reached out to 19 people and conducted interviews with nine of them. I identified three of the 9 interviewees through the snowball sampling method. I conducted the interviews in May and June of 2021. I conducted six over Zoom and three over the phone. I recorded all of the Zoom interviews, with the interviewees' permission, and transcribed them. I did not record the phone interviews but instead captured detailed notes. The IRB-approved informed consent script I read to each participant is in Appendix C. The interviews ranged in length from about 20 to 60 minutes. Interviewees all consented to having their names and organizations reported.

**Table 1***Interviewee Information*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Type of Organization</b>	<b>Who Person/Group Represents</b>	<b>Expected Perspective</b>
Doug Quattrochi	Executive Director	MassLandlords	Landlord trade association	Small to mid-sized landlords	Anti-moratorium
Eric Shupin	Policy Director	Citizens' Housing and Planning Association	State-wide advocacy organization	Affordable housing interests	Pro-moratorium
Greg Vasil	CEO	Greater Boston Real Estate Board	Real estate trade association	Mid-sized to large landlords	Anti-moratorium
Jeffrey Turk	Attorney	Turk & Quijano, LLP	Law firm specializing in landlord-tenant law	Large commercial and residential landlords	Anti-moratorium
Joe Kriesberg	President & CEO	Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations	Association of mission-driven community development corporations	Non-profit landlords of affordable housing units	Pro-moratorium
Kevin Honan	Representative	Massachusetts House of Representatives	State legislature	17 <sup>th</sup> Suffolk District (Allston/Brighton)	Pro-moratorium
Lewis Finfer	Founder and Special Projects Director	Massachusetts Communities Action Network	Faith-based, statewide community improvement organization	Racial equity and economic justice interests	Pro-moratorium
Rose Webster-Smith	Executive Director	Springfield No One Leaves	Member-led grassroots community organization	Tenants, including tenants of the bank (homeowners)	Pro-moratorium
Steve Meacham	Organizing Coordinator	City Life/Vida Urbana	Grassroots community organization	Tenants and small landlords	Pro-moratorium



I conducted semi-structured interviews. I wrote interview questions with the aim of getting responses that I hoped would answer each of my research questions. Through the interviews, I gathered information about the makeup of the advocacy coalitions, the coalitions' belief systems, motivations, and advocacy strategies, why they advocated for their specific position, and whether there had been any long-term shifts in the coalitions prior to the pandemic. The interview guide is in Appendix D. I tailored questions slightly to each person. I sometimes asked questions in a different order depending on the flow of the conversation. I did not ask all questions of everyone, as some interviewees had a limited amount of time to be interviewed.

Four interviewees worked for organizations that primarily represent landlords. Four other interviewees worked for groups either that primarily represented tenants or would be expected to, given the organizations' missions. One participant was a state representative for a district where 76% of housing units were occupied by renters as of 2010 (Department of Neighborhood Development, 2016).

To analyze the interviews, I imported my notes and transcriptions of the interviews into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. I coded them using inductive coding, meaning I did not know the codes I would use in advance. I used a mix of values coding to infer the belief systems of the interviewees and descriptive coding to gather information about their organization, who they represent, and answers to my questions. I looked for themes and answers to my research questions, like types of strategies used, types of motivations, examples of long-term change, and general descriptions of tenants and landlords.

I conducted two rounds of coding. In the first round, I coded everything and ended up with an unwieldy number of what NVivo calls "nodes." In the second round of coding, I condensed similar "nodes" and re-grouped "nodes" into larger categories to make them more

manageable. For example, I grouped “challenges working with other orgs,” “partners,” and “tension between landlord groups” into a higher level category called “descriptions of coalitions.” The final “nodes” were high-level categories whose sub-nodes were answers to the research questions. I started with over 60 high-level nodes and ended with 32. I also I re-read the interview transcriptions and notes and re-coded certain segments to better align with my new categories.

Drawing on the layout of Norhstedt (2013), I first documented the policy subsystem in the Findings Chapter, in which I described the stakeholders and paired interview findings with additional research from websites and new articles. In the Analysis Chapter, I identified key decisions, reasonings, belief systems, and views of interviewees. In the Discussion Chapter, I determined how the ACF and the SCTP could explain this particular policy shift.

In order to create the narratives that follow, I drew from published sources in addition to interview content. To disambiguate interviews from publications, all interview citations are marked by an asterisk (\*) next to the person’s last name. All other sources are cited according to American Psychological Association citation standards.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### Advocacy Coalitions

For the purposes of analysis using the ACF, I grouped the major actors involved in the passage and expiration of the eviction moratorium into two advocacy coalitions. I named each advocacy coalition and determined who belonged in which advocacy coalition based on interviews; the interviewees themselves did not identify themselves as part of either advocacy coalition. The information I collected during the interviews enabled me to assemble a picture of the advocacy coalitions involved in the eviction moratorium policy, including their makeup, strategies, and how they worked together. The advocacy coalitions involved in the statewide eviction moratorium were not as clear-cut as the pro-moratorium and anti-moratorium coalitions I hypothesized at the beginning of my research. After conducting the first interview with Doug Quattrochi\*, I realized that groups I assumed had pushed back against the moratorium had actually not actively opposed it to start. After conducting the interviews, I determined that there were still indeed two advocacy coalitions, but that they were more united by their belief systems and, to a lesser extent, whether or not they supported an extension of the moratorium. Based on this analysis, I renamed them the socially-motivated advocacy coalition and the market-motivated advocacy coalition. I chose the advocacy coalition names after determining their belief systems, which will be described in the Analysis chapter. The socially-motivated advocacy coalition advocated strongly for the eviction moratorium at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 and continued to push for more protections for tenants well into the fall. They were united by a desire to help those with less power and fewer resources. The market-motivated advocacy coalition contained members that either tolerated or opposed the eviction moratorium at the beginning of the pandemic and continued to push either against it or for additional

measures to protect landlords. They were aligned in wanting to protect business interests and keep the market economy running as it had before.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the advocacy coalitions are not perfectly neat groups and there are some differences of opinion within each, but some simplification is necessary in order to use the advocacy coalitions as a tool for understanding strategies and motivations (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). Table 2 shows which groups and people that I determined to be in each advocacy coalition based on interview findings. All actors listed were either interviewed or mentioned in interviews. It does not include any actor who was not mentioned in interviews, although there certainly were other actors involved in the passage of and expiration of the statewide eviction moratorium.

### **Documentation of Policy Subsystem**

I gathered the information on advocacy coalitions in service of answering one of my central research questions, which asked: how do state-wide political and coalition forces explain the passage of an eviction moratorium in MA in April 2020 and its subsequent expiration in October 2020? The rest of this Findings section tells the story of how the policy change happened, primarily based on findings from the interviews and supplemented with information from news articles and organization websites. Table 3 shows an overview of the major events related to the statewide eviction moratorium between March and October of 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> I decided on “socially-motivated advocacy coalition” because their belief systems centered around helping as many people as possible, especially those who had been disadvantaged in society. Even though they recognized the cost of the eviction moratorium on landlords, they felt that the social good of the eviction moratorium would impact more people and that those people especially needed the protections. I decided on “market-motivated advocacy coalition” because many of their beliefs centered around preserving a market-based housing system and business interests, including their views on profitability and protecting private property rights.

**Table 2**

*Advocacy Coalitions of Those Interviewed or Mentioned in Interviews*

	<b>Socially-Motivated Advocacy Coalition</b>	<b>Market-Motivated Advocacy Coalition</b>
<i>Political actors</i>	Representatives Honan and Connolly	Governor Baker
<i>Advocacy groups</i>	<p>Housing justice groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homes for All coalition (includes City Life/Vida Urbana (CLVU) and Springfield No One Leaves (SNOL))</li> <li>• Massachusetts Communities Action Network (MCAN)</li> </ul> <p>Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC)</p> <p>Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA)</p>	<p>Landlord groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater Boston Real Estate Board (GBREB)</li> <li>• MassLandlords</li> <li>• Small Property Owners Association (SPOA)</li> </ul>
<i>Judicial actors</i>	Chief Justice Gants	

**Table 3***MA Eviction Moratorium Timeline, March–October 2020*

<b>Date (2020)</b>	<b>Event</b>
March 10	Governor Baker declares a state of emergency to respond to COVID-19 (Office of the Governor, 2020a)
March 12	City Life/Vida Urbana holds rally outside Boston Municipal Court asking to shut down housing court (Tiernan, 2020)
March 13	Massachusetts Housing Court postpones most eviction hearings effective March 18 through April 21 (O’Grady, 2020)  Representatives Connolly and Honan file Bill HD.4935 to enact a moratorium on evictions (Office of Rep. Connolly, 2020a)
March 14	City of Boston announces a voluntary eviction moratorium in partnership with Greater Boston Real Estate Board and Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (Mayor’s Office, 2020)
April 20	Statewide eviction moratorium signed by Governor Baker with an expected expiration date of August 18
May 29	Legal challenge to eviction moratorium filed in state court (Chesto & Logan, 2020)
June 30	Representatives Connolly and Honan file HD.5166, “The COVID-19 Housing Stability Act” (Office of Rep. Connolly, 2020b)
July 15	Landlords file legal challenge to eviction moratorium in federal court
July 21	Governor Baker extends eviction moratorium to October 17, 2020 (Office of the Governor, 2020b)
August 26	State court judge rules against ending eviction moratorium (Rios, 2020d)
September 4	CDC federal eviction moratorium goes into effect through December 31, 2020
September 25	Federal court judge rules against ending eviction moratorium but expresses concerns about constitutionality if extended (Logan, 2020c)
October 12	Governor Baker announces Eviction Diversion Initiative (Governor’s Press Office, 2020)
October 17	State moratorium expires

### ***Housing Court Shutdown***

On March 10, 2020, Governor Baker issued a state of emergency to respond to COVID-19 (Office of the Governor, 2020a). On March 12, City Life/Vida Urbana (CLVU), a grassroots community organization that fights for housing rights, organized a protest outside of the Boston Municipal Court to urge the shutdown of housing court (Tiernan, 2020). Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), Boston's Office of Housing Stability, the Boston Housing Authority, and State Representatives Mike Connolly (D- Cambridge-Somerville) and Kevin Honan (D- Allston-Brighton), sent letters to the Housing Court Chief Justice Timothy F. Sullivan asking him to suspend housing court and no-fault evictions (Tiernan, 2020; Office of Rep. Connolly, 2020a). Those advocating for the shutdown provided two main reasons: one, the health risk posed by going into the courtroom itself, which often holds more than 100 people, during the pandemic, and two, the financial hardship faced by those losing jobs during the pandemic, primarily food service and hospitality workers (Tiernan, 2020). Attorney Jeffrey Turk\*, whose law firm represents landlords in court, recounted the confusion of that week, saying "I remember the last day I was in court before [...] the pandemic hit, already the courts were [...] trying to figure out what was going on [...], I remember that they were trying to figure out like, let people in the courtrooms, don't let people in the courtrooms? People would be in the hallways; do we wanna let people in the hallways?" The day after the protest, the Chief Justice shut down housing court for non-emergency court events, including most evictions, until April 21, 2020. (O'Grady, 2020). In the shut-down order, the reason he gave for the suspension was to slow the spread of the coronavirus (Housing Court Department, 2020).

### ***State Legislative Work***

Advocacy groups pushed for state legislation to protect more renters, as they argued that the temporary court shutdown did not do enough to help renters for three main reasons: (a) it did not cover evictions that had already been processed, meaning constables in those cases could still physically evict people; (b) it was not long enough since they did not know how long the pandemic would last; and (c) it encouraged outside-the-court agreements, which they worried would be unfavorable to tenants (Howard King, 2020). In response to the CLVU protest on March 12, Representatives Connolly and Honan began working on bill HD.4935, *An Act Providing for a Moratorium on Evictions and Foreclosures During the COVID19 Emergency*, which they filed on March 13, 2020 (Howard, 2020; Office of Rep. Connolly, 2020a).

### ***City of Boston's Voluntary Eviction Moratorium***

On March 14, 2020, the City of Boston announced a partnership with the Greater Boston Real Estate Board (GBREB) and the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC) to voluntarily implement an eviction moratorium (Mayor's Office, 2020). Because Greg Vasil, CEO of GBREB, and Joe Kriesberg, President and CEO of MACDC, already had existing connections with the City of Boston—both were members of the city's Eviction Prevention Task Force, formed prior to the pandemic—neither of them were surprised when the city called and asked them to participate in the partnership (Department of Neighborhood Development, 2019; Kriesberg\*; Vasil\*). That weekend, Kriesberg\* called his members, who are landlords of affordable housing units, to make sure enough of them were willing to follow the moratorium. Since they were, he agreed to participate in the partnership. Supporting the voluntary eviction moratorium was good for public communications; he said his members were not inclined to say that they were going to evict people during a pandemic. He



added that “the fact that the Mayor was asking, through Sheila [Dillon, Chief of Housing for the City of Boston], mattered a whole lot” (Kriesberg\*).

The partnership was voluntary, in that property owners affiliated with GBREB and MACDC were encouraged to abide by the moratorium, but not forced to. GBREB’s members varied in what they could offer. For example, family-run companies had more flexibility in what they could implement, whereas larger, multi-national companies that are publicly-traded real estate investment trusts (REITs) had more trouble implementing an eviction moratorium because they had to answer to their stockholders, or their properties were located in multiple states that were all implementing different COVID-19 measures (Vasil\*).

### ***Refining the State Legislation***

The partnership with GBREB and MACDC only applied to properties in the City of Boston, so advocates for an eviction moratorium continued working on and pushing for statewide legislation. Representative Connolly immediately reached out to CLVU to include them in the drafting of the legislation, and they in turn connected with other housing advocacy groups (Howard, 2020). At the beginning, legal aid groups were the most active and vocal in drafting the legislation given their work with tenants on eviction cases (Shupin\*). The groups that worked on drafting and shaping the legislation with Honan and Connolly included, among others, Lawyers for Civil Rights, GBLS, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI), Chinese Progressive Association, Lynn United for Change, Springfield No One Leaves (SNOL), Massachusetts Communities Action Network (MCAN), and Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants (Finfer\*; Honan\*; Howard, 2020; Office of Rep. Connolly, 2020a; Webster-Smith\*). There was a core committee that regularly consulted with the legislators (Meacham\*). Citizens’ Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) worked with multiple people at the State House, including

the Senate Ways and Means committee, the Senate President's office, and the Housing Committee, of which Representative Honan was the chair at the time (Shupin\*). MACDC was not involved in drafting the legislation, but participated in advocacy and lobbying around it (Kriesberg\*).

Groups representing landlords, including MassLandlords, GBREB, and Small Property Owners Association (SPOA), also worked on influencing the legislation in different ways. GBREB talked to legislators and was very involved in reviewing and commenting on the bills (Turk\*). Vasil\* said, "it was not unusual to be on the phone with the Governor's office or with the Mayor, talking about this stuff." MassLandlords worked with their members to call their legislators, but other than that, they said they stayed silent during the stage when the bill was being passed, even though they talked about it internally (Quattrochi\*). SPOA published newsletters (Quattrochi\*) and provided quotes for news articles at the time (Wintersmith, 2020; Arnold, 2020).

About 200 groups pushed for a strong eviction moratorium (Matthews, 2020). These included "community groups, labor unions, teachers unions, domestic violence centers, public health organizations, and legal advocates" (Matthews, 2020). Those who were most involved included the legal aid groups, MLRI and GBLS, MCAN, and a statewide coalition called Homes for All (Matthews, 2020). The Homes for All coalition should not be confused with the advocacy coalitions; I consider it to be a part of the socially-motivated coalition. Rose Webster-Smith\*, Executive Director of SNOL, told me that many of the organizations working with Representative Connolly and Honan were already connected through this Homes for All coalition. She said that though the groups in the coalition had been in talks for about two years, the pandemic gave them the push they needed to launch the coalition. The groups involved in

Homes for All included some already mentioned—SNOL, CLVU, Lynn United for Change, and Chinese Progressive Association—as well as Right to the City Boston, Chinatown Community Land Trust, Arise for Social Justice, and New England United for Change, among others. As noted earlier, other groups advocating for the moratorium were CHAPA and MACDC.

Kriesberg\* of MACDC said that while not perfect, “there’s pretty good communication among housing advocates” and recalled that at the time, “we were all on the call and on Zooms constantly, so we all knew what else was going on.”

Some of the organizations involved in advocacy already had close connections with the legislature, such as CHAPA, MCAN, MACDC, and GBREB. When I asked Vasil\* of GBREB how his organization typically approaches advocacy work, he said he had never been asked that before — “you just do it.” Since his organization had preexisting relationships with all levels of government, he was invited in to talks about how to approach the issue (Vasil\*). Eric Shupin\*, Policy Director at CHAPA, said his preexisting relationships with legislators made his work possible at the beginning of the pandemic. Shupin\* and Vasil\* told me that before the pandemic, they would walk into the State House and talk to different legislators and their staff. However, at the beginning of the pandemic, work was being conducted virtually and the State House was empty; Shupin\* said even office phones were not being answered. He said he would have felt left out of the process had he not had those existing relationships, which included having cellphone numbers and email addresses. MCAN also became involved because they had years of legislative experience and relationships with some of the decision-makers and their staff (Finfer\*). Lew Finfer\*, Founder and Special Projects Director at MCAN, said he contributed to the efforts to pass the moratorium by drawing on his relationships to coordinate meetings with staff in the Speaker’s office and the House and Senate Ways and Means Committees. Other

groups in the socially-motivated advocacy coalition already had connections to some of the legislators too, like Representative Connolly, who is active on tenants' rights (Finfer\*).

Kriesberg\* of MACDC said his organization was already close to Representative Honan.

Finfer\* of MCAN said that his group focused on working with just their allies in the legislature because they did not know at first if the eviction moratorium legislation would have the support of the Governor, who he said does not tend to be inclined towards tenants' rights.

MACDC and GBREB had more connections to the Governor's office and referenced meeting with him that year.

For other groups, it was their first time being invited to the table. Webster-Smith\* of SNOL told me that the State Representatives and Senators "allowed us to be a part of that process. Which is not something that, you know, any of us normally do, like, we're not lobbyists, we're not [...] typically invited into those spaces." She attributed their being invited to the State Representatives and Senators understanding that community groups have the best knowledge of community needs (Webster-Smith\*). Doug Quattrochi\*, Executive Director of MassLandlords, said his group had no direct connections to the legislature and was a novice at advocacy.

Not all advocacy for the statewide eviction moratorium legislation centered around direct talks with legislators. CLVU collected over 7,000 signatures on a petition for a statewide eviction moratorium (CLVU, 2020a). Over 200 organizations signed an April 5 letter addressed to the Governor, Senate President, Speaker of the House, and members of legislature urging them to pass a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures and outlining what they wanted to see included (CLVU, 2020b). Many advocacy organizations mobilized their members to call and email legislators and the Governor, including CHAPA (CHAPA, 2020a), SNOL (Webster-Smith\*), and CLVU, who said that 1,000 community members contacted the Governor the

weekend before he signed the bill, urging him to sign it (Matthews, 2020). Others published their policy recommendations; for example, MACDC published initial policy recommendations on March 23 in which they expressed support for the moratorium (MACDC, 2020). And, as referenced earlier, CLVU organized a demonstration to bring awareness to their demands.

Quattrochi\* told me that MassLandlords did not actively push back against the eviction moratorium in the first month after the bill was filed, when it was being discussed (“we were pretty silent”). In an April 10 article, he was described as being “neutral on the bills” (Rios, 2020b). However, MassLandlords did share what they believed should be changed in the proposed legislation. In mid-March, they sent a letter to the Speaker of the House that did not explicitly mention the eviction moratorium, but proposed three other policies the legislature could take (Quattrochi, 2020a). On March 19, they published a list of what they wanted to see changed in the proposed legislation (Quattrochi, 2020b). MassLandlords also organized their members to contact their legislators and talk about the proposed changes (Quattrochi\*; Quattrochi, 2020a). One anecdote from interviews that I was unable to verify with a second source is that SPOA hired a paid lobbyist to advocate against the moratorium (Quattrochi\*). If this is true, it suggests that some landlord groups were willing to dedicate significant resources to opposing it.

### ***Passage Process***

The eviction moratorium bill took about a month to pass after being filed on March 13, 2020, which interviewees told me was much faster than the usual process of passing a bill into law (Honan\*; Quattrochi\*; Shupin\*). During that time frame, the Massachusetts legislature was still conducting their business in person but through informal sessions, which do not require all legislators present, thereby allowing for social distancing. However, informal sessions require a

unanimous vote (Editorial Board, 2020). After Representatives Connolly and Honan filed the bill on March 13, the Senate Ways and Means Committee passed a bill on April 1 and the House passed a bill on April 2 (Rios, 2020a). Housing advocates were not satisfied with the bill out of the Senate, which would have allowed landlords to send eviction notices and file evictions in court, even if it did not allow the cases to be heard in court until the moratorium expired (Finfer, 2020). They knew from their work with members that many people who receive an eviction notice—a notice to quit—either leave at that point because they think they have to (they do not) or leave because they have gone through the eviction process before and do not want to go through it again (Finfer, 2020; Webster-Smith\*). The housing advocates mobilized their members to call their legislators about this, and ultimately, the Senate removed this provision (Finfer, 2020; Webster-Smith\*).

The House and Senate could not agree on a final version of the bill so they went into a conference committee with three members each of the House and Senate (Rios, 2020b; Honan\*). The conference committee agreed on a comprised version of the bill on April 15 (Logan, 2020a). Shortly after, Representative Shawn Dooley (R- 9<sup>th</sup> Norfolk district) used a procedural motion to halt the bill from proceeding. He did not give a reason for his objection (Van Buskirk, 2020). According to Representative Honan\*, Governor Baker and the Minority Leader called Representative Dooley, and he later withdrew his objection. Governor Baker signed the bill into law on April 20, 2020: An Act Providing for a Moratorium on Evictions and Foreclosures During the COVID-19 Emergency (Logan, 2020b). Although the passage of the legislation happened relatively quickly, between the time the court shut down and the statewide moratorium was implemented, over 700 eviction cases were filed (Matthews, 2020; Webster-Smith\*).

Multiple interviewees noted with pride that the statewide eviction moratorium was one of the strongest ones in the country (Honan\*; Meacham\*; Webster-Smith\*). At one point, it was rated the strongest by the Eviction Lab at Princeton (Matthews, 2020); as of October 2021, it was ranked third, behind Washington, D.C. and Nevada (Eviction Lab, 2020b). Because eviction moratoriums had not been implemented in the U.S. before the pandemic, Massachusetts policymakers could not learn from other states and municipalities to guide the crafting of the legislation. Shupin\* of CHAPA recalled looking at what some municipalities had passed by that point for guidance, but other than that, interviewees did not look to other policies, likely because they had not been passed yet.

### ***Pushback Against the Eviction Moratorium***

On the legislative side, the main opposition to the bill came from Representative Shawn Dooley, but as just described, that was quickly resolved. On the advocacy side, pushback to the proposed legislation came in two forms: wanting components of it changed and opposing it altogether. The scale of how much someone opposed the legislation often correlated with the scale of the landlord's operation. Small landlords, often referred to as "mom and pop" landlords, tended to either oppose the moratorium outright or wanted it to be changed or shorter. Small landlords, not large ones, were the ones to later file court cases against the legislation. Attorney Turk\* told me, "if you look, it's small landlords that filed those cause most of the large property owners didn't wanna be viewed as being in favor of eviction." SPOA is self-described as "mom and pop" landlords (SPOA, n.d.) and they opposed the legislation (Quattrochi\*). Vasil\* of GBREB told me that some landlords wanted to support the eviction moratorium but were unable to because of their size and means. In addition to SPOA, other groups that opposed the moratorium and organized their members to call legislators and ask it not to be passed included

the Massachusetts Association of Realtors, and the Greater Boston Rental Housing Association (Finfer\*).

Other groups representing small to mid-sized landlords fell more in the middle of the spectrum of opposition to the moratorium at the beginning. MassLandlords is composed of small, “mom and pop,” to mid-sized landlords. The average number of units that their members own is 19 and the median number is nine (Quattrochi\*). Their largest member has 500 units, but Quattrochi\* said that is small compared to other companies which own tens of thousands of units. As noted earlier, MassLandlords did not oppose the moratorium outright at the beginning, but they did advocate for changes to it. They also felt squeezed by the way the Boston eviction moratorium partnership was handled. As described earlier, in mid-March 2020, the City of Boston entered into partnership with GBREB, which primarily represents mid-sized to large landlords, and MACDC, which represents landlords of affordable units, where rent is subsidized and adjusted based on income. MassLandlords felt that the partnership “set the tone that all landlords must be able to do this,” which it did not feel to be the case for some of its smaller landlord members (Quattrochi\*).

The larger landlords as represented by GBREB and the ones with affordable housing tenants were less likely to voice outright opposition to the eviction moratorium. Tenants in subsidized housing typically pay 30% of their income on rent and the rest is covered by the subsidy. Therefore, if their income drops to zero, as it might if they lost their job at the beginning of the pandemic, their rent should correspondingly go down to zero. However, they have to go through a recertification process for that to happen. Attorney Turk\* told me that “affordable housing providers very quickly were trying to reach out to those tenants because in theory, they should not have had any impact.” In practice, tenants did not always go through this process and



therefore fell behind on rent (Turk\*). Quattrochi\* felt that the reason the large landlords were able to agree to the voluntary eviction moratorium with the City of Boston was because the large companies that signed on to the pledge either tended to rent to white-collar tenants who would not lose their jobs during the pandemic and could work from home, or subsidized tenants; I was unable to verify this with a second source. He said, “it’s easy for a large landlord, that’s renting upmarket with subsidized housing, to say, ‘oh, we won’t need to file for eviction,’ because they’ve also got so much cash to begin with.” Kriesberg\* of MACDC acknowledged that community development corporations (CDCs), which own affordable housing, tend to be well-capitalized and have big reserves: “I don’t think it was a huge financial risk.” He added that CDCs were already skilled at assisting tenants through the process of applying for rental assistance, “so there weren’t [...] massive rent arrearages.”

In summary, the advocacy coalition of people pushing against the eviction moratorium or who wanted changes to it, the market-motivated advocacy coalition, was not a unified coalition. It was composed primarily of groups representing landlords, but each group had a different perspective depending on their size, their tenant mix, their ownership structure, and interests.

### ***Arguments for Opposing the Moratorium***

I did not speak with anyone who outright opposed the eviction moratorium when it was getting passed, so I am not including any of those arguments here. In the next section, I will go into more detail about opposition to the moratorium that came later. However, some of the groups I spoke with did want changes to the legislation at the beginning, even if they did not actively voice opposition to it at first. One such group was MassLandlords. They opposed to the provision that would fine and/or jail sheriffs, constables, or anyone else if they enforced or carried out an execution for possession of a property (Quattrochi\*). This was ultimately removed

from the final bill (An Act Providing for a Moratorium on Evictions and Foreclosures During the COVID-19 Emergency, 2020). In the early days of the pandemic, MassLandlords also asked for the state to guarantee rents for those unable to pay, and for a universal basic income during the state of emergency (Quattrochi, 2020a).

### ***Arguments for Supporting the Moratorium***

The groups that actively pushed for the passage of the eviction moratorium tended to have organizational missions centered around tenants' rights and affordable housing. The two main reasons that groups supported the moratorium were first, for public health reasons to limit the spread of COVID-19, and second, to help people affected by income loss from large-scale unemployment. They felt that if people were evicted, they would move in with family or friends or into a shelter, and therefore risk spreading or contracting the disease. There was some confusion amongst groups about which of those was the primary reason (Kriesberg\*), but public health tended to be cited as the main reason. Once people started receiving stimulus checks and unemployment benefits, they may have been more financially sound, but the risk of spreading COVID-19 due to an eviction remained. In addition, some interviewees felt that the eviction moratorium was important for racial justice reasons, given the disproportionate impact that both COVID-19 and evictions have had on communities of color (Honan\*; Meacham\*).

### ***Summer Advocacy***

Once the moratorium had been in place for a few months, certain legislators and advocacy groups shifted their attention to continuing and strengthening it. They continued working on it for three main reasons. First, they did not know if Governor Baker was going to extend the eviction moratorium beyond its scheduled expiration date of August 18 since he did not announce its two-month extension until July 21 (CHAPA, 2020c). Housing advocates had

been hoping for a 90-day or more extension—the Governor had the power to extend up to 90 days—but he only extended it for 60 days, through October 17 (Kriesberg\*; Honan\*). Second, landlords filed legal challenges against the statewide moratorium. Third, grassroots organizations were finding that the moratorium was not sufficient to protect tenants; Webster-Smith\* told me that SNOL saw “people being faced with illegal evictions even during the moratorium and [...] landlords bullying them and shutting off the electricity in the middle of a heat wave so they didn’t have air conditioning.” Therefore, on June 30, Representatives Honan and Connolly filed a bill HD.5166, An Act to Guarantee Housing Stability During the COVID-19 Emergency and Recovery, also known as the Housing Stability Act (Office of Rep. Connolly, 2020b). This bill proposed extending the eviction and foreclosure moratorium through a full year after the COVID-19 state of emergency end date, which had not been declared yet, and adding more provisions to help renters and landlords, such as freezing rents at March 2020 levels and establishing a fund to help landlords with missed rental income (Office of Rep. Connolly, 2020b). Whereas any extension of the existing eviction moratorium depended on the discretion of the Governor, the proposed legislation would eliminate the need to rely on the Governor for an extension. However, it remained in committee for months (Howard, 2020).

The first legal challenge to the statewide eviction moratorium, *Matorin v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, was filed on May 29 in state court (Chesto & Logan, 2020; Vetstein, 2020). A second legal challenge to the moratorium, *Baptiste v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, was filed on July 15 in federal court (Court Listener, 2021; Vetstein, 2020). Both cases were filed by attorneys Richard Vetstein and Jordana Greenman on behalf of small landlords (Chesto & Logan, 2020; Vetstein, 2020). Vetstein and Greenman claimed that landlords have a constitutional right to go to court regarding their property. They also argued that the eviction

moratorium was an unconstitutional taking of property. Quattrochi\* explained that the landlords who supported the lawsuits at least wanted to receive compensation for what they believed was a taking, even if the law was not overturned as unconstitutional. A third argument in the court cases was that there was a tenuous link between the expected rise in COVID-19 cases from the expected number of evictions that would take place without the moratorium in place, which would render legislators' public health rationale for implementing the moratorium moot. Finally, Vetstein and Greenman argued that the moratorium violates the separation of powers in that the legislative branch interfered too much with the judicial branch (Rios, 2020c). Interviewees referenced the first two arguments in interviews, but none of them referenced these latter two. In August, Judge Paul Wilson decided not to grant a preliminary injunction, which would have halted the eviction moratorium, in his ruling in *Matorin v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, saying that "The balance of harms and the public interest favor upholding the law to protect the public health and economic wellbeing of tenants and the public in general during this health and economic emergency" (Rios, 2020d).

The socially-motivated advocacy coalition used a myriad of advocacy techniques in the summer of 2020 in their efforts to protect and extend the eviction moratorium. Some groups lent their help to the defendants in the legal cases against moratorium. For example, CHAPA and MACDC filed an amicus brief in the case before state court (CHAPA, 2020d). Some published online materials, such as policy briefs (CHAPA, 2020b) or websites to promote their views and encourage people to contact their legislators, like one called HousingGuarantee.org, established by the Homes for All coalition (Homes for All Massachusetts, 2021; Quattrochi\*). Webster-Smith\* noted that having the moratorium in place actually helped SNOL free up time to work on policy because they did not have to spend as much time working with members who were at

immediate risk of displacement. Those who had a connection to the Governor's office used it to push for their policy goals. For example, MACDC met with Governor Baker in June and tried to convince him to extend the moratorium beyond the 90 days allowed by law. They argued that first, he should extend it at least beyond September in order to provide stability for families with children who would begin conducting school remotely again, and second, that he should extend it beyond the elections of November 2020, rightly predicting a change in congressional and presidential power: "You don't wanna start evicting people in November if Congress is gonna come in and write a big check in January" (Kriesberg\*).

The socially-motivated advocacy coalition also started planning for what would happen if the moratorium expired. In June, Chief Justice Gants of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court brought together a group of about 50 people from different stakeholder groups, including grassroots organizations like SNOL and more policy-oriented organizations like CHAPA (Honan\*; Kriesberg\*; Webster-Smith\*). He wanted to prepare the courts to respond to the expected influx of evictions by connecting tenants to lawyers and rental assistance (Finfer\*). Representative Honan\* explained that it was unusual and extraordinary for someone from the judiciary to take such a deep interest in solving such a problem, especially given the typical separation between the judicial and legislative branches.

More groups representing landlords became less favorable towards the moratorium as the months passed. First, while many understood the reasoning for the moratorium at the beginning and were willing to work something out with their tenants or forego rent for a month or two, they felt that they could not continue to do so as the moratorium went on. Even Kriesberg\*, President and CEO of MACDC, which pushed for the passage of the eviction moratorium, said that some community development corporations were owed months of rent prior to the pandemic, and were

worried about how long they would have to wait to receive it. Quattrochi\* explained that many landlords operated on the assumption that they would eventually be repaid through a social safety net for providing what he deemed “free housing.” Both Turk\* and Quattrochi\* said that landlords needed the rent money to pay for many types of expenses: the mortgage (the foreclosure moratorium only applied to owner-occupied 1-to-4-family properties), property taxes, insurance, repairs, management and maintenance staff, additional cleaning costs due to COVID-19 protocols, and heat for tenants who could not afford it, which became more of a concern as it got colder. Turk\* said, “a lot of times people forget about the fact that rent isn’t profit, rent pays the expenses.” Quattrochi\* said that small landlords were particularly impacted by the loss of rental income due to the moratorium; he said that more small landlords were selling out of the business as evidenced by a decline in MassLandlord’s annual membership renewal numbers.

The representatives of landlord groups I spoke to tended to agree that renters should be helped during the pandemic but felt that the responsibility should not fall on landlords to provide that help. They all talked about it in a similar way: that landlords provided a social good—safe, clean housing units—and that they should not be forced to cover all the expenses for it, especially during a pandemic that they did not cause. Even Kriesberg\* of MACDC, an organization that said they supported the Housing Stability Act, made the argument in his interview that housing was a social good and that extending the moratorium into 2022 would have placed an “unreasonable burden” on landlords. Without the rent to cover their expenses, landlords felt they would not be able to provide this service.

Therefore, they advocated for additional measures to help landlords. One was to have property taxes to be guaranteed, waived, or deferred (Turk\*; Quattrochi, 2020a). They asked the

legislature to waive property taxes, but were told no (Turk\*). MassLandlords conducted a survey with its members to decide on a policy to advocate for. The survey results showed that doing a tax strike was not popular with landlords, but that lobbying for a second law to add funding during the eviction moratorium was. Based on results from the survey, MassLandlords decided to advocate for a policy where the Commonwealth would guarantee landlords all COVID-19-related losses via surety bonds, essentially paying back landlords the rent that was missed. The landlords who participated in the survey also liked the idea of advocating for more rental assistance funding, but slightly preferred the surety bond option because they thought that the process of getting the rental assistance funding would be slower (Quattrochi\*).

Another measure that some landlord groups would have liked to see was the ability to start eviction proceedings. GBREB agreed with the provision to prevent evictions from physically taking place but would have preferred allowing landlords to initiate evictions and keeping the courts open to process them up until the physical eviction (Vasil\*). There were a few reasons why they wanted this. First, Attorney Turk\*, legal counsel for GBREB and senior partner at a law firm that represents many landlords, argued that keeping the courts open constituted “access to justice,” or the “right to see a judge,” the same argument that Attorneys Vetstein and Greenman used in the court cases. Attorney Turk\* also argued that keeping the courts closed would create a backlog of cases to process once the moratorium ended, which he predicted would result in long delays to see a judge. Third, GBREB felt that the eviction moratorium made it harder for landlords to engage with tenants to work out payment plans and would actually end up hurting tenants. Both Attorney Turk\* and Vasil\* said that after the passage of the eviction moratorium, many tenants who owed rent stopped communicating with landlords. They thought this might be for a number of reasons: a significant economic impact; a

desire to hoard their money due to fear and uncertainty about what was going to happen at the beginning of the pandemic; a distrust of government based on experiences in their home countries; misinformation—being told they did not have to pay their rent or that the government would; and advice from tenant groups telling them that they did not have to talk to their landlord (Turk\*, Vasil\*). Attorney Turk\* explained that landlords do not want to evict tenants because it is not in their benefit to have empty apartments; therefore, they often rely on payment plans. However, the longer someone goes without paying anything, the harder it is to work out a reasonable payment plan. Vasil\* added his reasoning for wanting to keep the courts open: “the difficulty is, sometimes, the only way to get tenants’ attention is to start that process [of filing an eviction].” A final reason they wanted to keep the courts open was to allow people to access services provided by the courts, including mediation, access to rental assistance, mental health services, services for hoarding, and medical services (Turk\*; Vasil\*). Attorney Turk\* estimated that about 98% of eviction cases that go to court are resolved through mediation.

Another reason some groups representing landlords opposed an extension of the moratorium if there was not going to be additional help for landlords was because they felt that some tenants tried to take advantage of the situation. Quattrochi\* told me that many landlords found empty fireworks cartridges outside properties where tenants were not paying rent, saying “that was the rent money we were seeing going up in the sky.” Vasil\* provided a different anecdote about a tenant who posted a picture of himself online with a new boat captioned “haven’t paid rent, bought the boat.” Vasil\* felt that this tenant could have paid the rent with the money he spent on the boat, and felt it was unfair to other tenants who he thought genuinely could not pay the rent because they lost their job. These two anecdotal stories show that some landlords thought that because of the eviction moratorium policy, they were losing money they



should have been able to receive. Vasil\* also said that at the beginning of the pandemic, tenants in the Berkshires and central Massachusetts were illegally posting their units on Airbnb. He said this caused concern for neighboring tenants, who worried that the units would be rented to people from New York, which at that time was hit hard by COVID-19, and cause transmission of COVID-19.

Some groups opposed the moratorium because they felt it applied to too many cases. Quattrochi\* felt that the federal moratorium that came later was more reasonable in that it only covered people impacted by COVID-19 who were making a good-faith effort to pay or get assistance. He felt the Massachusetts one was too broad in that it covered everyone except for cases where public health and safety were at risk. Even some who supported the moratorium found a drawback to it for a similar reason. Some community development corporation landlords felt that the moratorium limited their ability to remove tenants who broke the rules given its restrictions on almost all types of evictions. Kriesberg\* explained that prior to the pandemic, some landlords would evict on the basis of non-payment of rent rather than for violation of rules since the process for the former was easier. They felt they lost that leverage with the moratorium. While I do not believe that MACDC used this argument to advocate against the moratorium, I do think it could explain why they later did not push the Governor to extend the moratorium once he announced he was not planning on doing so.

Some members of the socially-motivated advocacy coalition offered rebuttals to the landlord groups' arguments for changing or opposing the moratorium. Meacham\* of CLVU countered the argument that the courts should stay open in order to help tenants get rental assistance or work out payment plans: he said in his anecdotal experience, tenants wanted to cooperate. He said that the CLVU hotline had received 3,500 calls, many of which were from

tenants who felt bad they could not pay the rent or had tried to apply for rental assistance but could not get it. Additionally, Kriesberg\* pushed back against the assertion that landlords should not carry the burden since they were not responsible for COVID-19. In a *Boston Globe* article, he noted that other businesses, like gyms and restaurants, had also lost business due to COVID-19 but were not generally suing the government because of that (Chesto & Logan, 2020).

Like the housing justice groups, the market-motivated advocacy coalition also used a variety of advocacy techniques that summer. Some filed amicus briefs to support the landlords' lawsuits; for example, Turk & Quijano filed one on behalf of their client, Institute of Real Estate Management, in *Matorin v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts* (Turk & Quijano, 2020). MassLandlords published an online brochure detailing their surety bond policy proposal that was targeted towards legislators (Quattrochi\*). Quattrochi\* said that MassLandlords tried to use a friendly and collaborative approach in both the brochure and their interactions, which he said contrasted with what he felt was the more strident imagery of the housing justice groups' Housing Guarantee website. He described an environment of "stridency and hostility" at the beginning, and felt his approach was unsuccessful at getting attention on MassLandlords' policy proposals. He said he tried for months to get a Zoom meeting with CHAPA about the surety bond proposal and felt like the idea was dismissed.

### ***Fall Advocacy***

On September 1, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) announced a federal eviction moratorium effective September 4 through December 31, 2020. Both Kriesberg\* and Vasil\* indicated surprise that an eviction moratorium came from the Trump administration; they had not been expecting it. The federal moratorium was not as strong as the Massachusetts one, so the Massachusetts protections still held. On September 14, 2020, Chief Justice Ralph Gants

unexpectedly died (DeCosta-Klipa, 2020a). Even though another chief justice took over the organizing efforts (Honan\*), housing justice advocates felt that there was a loss of leadership and momentum; for example, grassroots organizations like SNOL were no longer invited to the table (Finfer\*; Webster-Smith\*). Another blow to the socially-motivated advocacy coalition occurred in late September after Judge Mark L. Wolf shared his opinion in the federal court case of *Baptiste v. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*. While he declined to immediately stop the moratorium, he cautioned that the moratorium may not be constitutional if it were to be extended beyond October 17 (Logan, 2020c).

Governor Baker suggested in a news conference on September 23 that he did not intend to extend the eviction moratorium (Logan & Stout, 2020). His administration met with a group that included court officials, some landlords, and some housing advocates to discuss what to put in place once the moratorium expired; MACDC was involved (Logan & Stout, 2020), but other housing justice advocates felt left out of it (Connolly, 2020). Governor Baker also hired a consultant, McKinsey & Company, to help plan for next steps (Atkinson, 2021). Additionally, Meacham\* pointed out that the expiration date occurred as a second surge of COVID-19 cases was taking place. Advocates therefore worried that the eviction moratorium would expire and tenants would be left without adequate protections, especially since at the time, it was predicted that 60,000 Massachusetts households could be at risk of immediate eviction (Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 2020). They therefore conducted a lot of advocacy efforts in the weeks leading up to October 17, 2020. At that point, however, there was a split in the socially-motivated advocacy coalition. Shupin\* of CHAPA told me that once they knew Governor Baker was not going to extend the moratorium, they focused on advocating for more rental assistance, assistance for homeless shelters, and for the groups administering those programs rather than on

the Housing Stability Act, as did MACDC (Kriesberg\*). Other groups focused their efforts on the Housing Stability Act. In late September, it was reported out favorably by the legislature's Joint Committee on Housing and moved to the Committee on Rules of the two branches (Office of Rep. Connolly, 2020c). Representative Honan wanted Governor Baker to extend the moratorium so they would have more time to work on it (Murphy, 2020). Many news outlets published stories about the impending expiration of the moratorium, many of which predicted a "tsunami" of evictions (Kriesberg\*; Turk\*).

The week before the eviction moratorium was set to expire, Governor Baker announced a \$171 million Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI). The initiative allocated \$100 million to expanding the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program, which provides rental assistance, and additional money for rapid rehousing, legal representation, mediation, and case management (Office of the Governor, 2020c). After the announcement, advocates continued pushing him to extend the moratorium. Even Massachusetts' federal representatives weighed in; U.S. Representative Ayanna Pressley called on Governor Baker to extend the eviction moratorium (Associated Press, 2020). On October 14, about 100 to 150 housing activists gathered outside the Governor's home to call on him to extend the moratorium and support the Housing Stability Act (LeBlanc, 2020). The next day, Representative Mike Connolly attempted to file an emergency petition to extend the moratorium until January 1, 2021, but he was unable to get a quorum to do so (Murphy, 2020).

Some actors, though not all, in the socially-motivated advocacy coalition pushed hard for an extension of the moratorium and the passage of the Housing Stability Act for a few reasons in addition to their initial reasons for wanting to pass the moratorium in the first place, which were described earlier. First, they felt that Governor Baker's EDI proposal would not be sufficient to

protect tenants or homeowners. Grassroots organizations knew from experience working with their members applying for RAFT that even an infusion of funds and a more streamlined application process would not be sufficient or timely enough to help tenants at risk of eviction. Webster-Smith\* said, “Governor Baker didn’t know the issues with the RAFT program where we did, cause we’ve been working with RAFT for years [...] the blame is strictly on the Governor who didn’t do his research to know that, you know, there was all these issues with the RAFT program prior [to the expiration of the moratorium].” There was a backlog of applications and the process of receiving funds from RAFT is slow (Meacham\*; Quattrochi\*). And, even though the EDI provided money for legal representation, mediation, and assistance with rental assistance applications in court, both Meacham\* and Finfer\* noted that hiring and training additional lawyers and personnel takes months and that it was not fully set up when the moratorium expired. A second reason why some housing justice advocates pushed hard for the Housing Stability Act was because they had seen throughout the pandemic that the statewide moratorium was not sufficient to keep everyone safely housed. As noted earlier, illegal evictions were still occurring (Webster-Smith\*).

## Chapter 5: Analysis

This chapter analyzes the responses from interviewees to explain why the statewide eviction moratorium passed so quickly, why it was not extended in October 2020, and to describe the belief systems of each advocacy coalition, including how they viewed tenants and landlords.

### Why the Eviction Moratorium Passed so Quickly

As noted earlier, many interviewees told me that the legislation passed much faster than bills usually do. This was likely because there was a broad range of actors and groups who wanted to see something done to address the problem - from the legislature, to the Governor, to groups representing tenants, and even some groups who represented landlords. Even if not all the landlord groups supported it, some decided not to actively oppose the legislation. Shupin\* of CHAPA told me that “there was a [...] clear indication that the legislature wanted to do something and this was [...] one of those policy solutions that quickly gained a lot of support and momentum.” Representative Honan\* said that housing became a top priority of the legislature, and that Governor Baker knew the significance of the legislation. Meacham\* of CLVU said that Governor Baker was signaling that something should be done.

I asked interviewees why they thought an eviction moratorium was able to pass with broad support, even though evictions had been occurring prior to the pandemic and such a policy had never been proposed before. Through the interviews, I discovered five reasons why interviewees thought the eviction moratorium was able to pass:

- Protect public health
- Large scale unemployment
- Public perception: no fault
- Little to lose
- Existing momentum for tenants’ rights

### ***Protect Public Health***

The primary reason that the moratorium was able to pass is because most groups involved in the policymaking process understood that it was to protect public health. Almost everyone I interviewed listed public health as a reason why the eviction moratorium was needed. They recognized that if someone was evicted, they would double up with family or friends, go to a homeless shelter, or end up on the streets. The first option carried the risk of spreading COVID-19. The second option did as well, since shelters are congregate settings and Shupin\* said that shelters at that point were still figuring out how to operate with the virus. The third option was something everyone wanted to avoid. Additionally, two interviewees mentioned that housing courtrooms, which can be packed with up to 200 people, are potential super-spreader event sites (Meacham\*; Turk\*).

Representatives of the landlord groups I spoke to recognized that what was needed at the time was for everyone to shelter in place. Vasil\* of GBREB explained why there was support for the moratorium at the beginning: “you don’t want to put people in congregate settings, [...] you have to socially distance them.” He explained why the policy response was different to before the pandemic: “When the pandemic hit it just was different because it was like wait a second, you can’t put people out, they’ve gotta stay home.” He added, “when you have a situation where a tenant can’t leave their house for fear that their health could be in jeopardy, owners got that.” A WBUR article described Quattrochi of MassLandlords as understanding that “tenants shouldn’t be forced into the street during a public health emergency” (Rios, 2020b). And Turk\* felt that there was general consensus that no one should be evicted during a global pandemic.

The interviewees in the socially-motivated advocacy coalition also believed that a major purpose of the moratorium was to stop the spread. Shupin\* said that it protected both the

individual and community. Webster-Smith\* of SNOL used her knowledge of the community to argue for supporting the moratorium, saying that the moratorium preventing notices to quit from being filed “is exactly what our communities need in order for them to stay home, and not go out and get these high-risk jobs like Uber and, you know, start spreading the virus around because that’s what was happening.”

The public health reasons motivated many people to support or at least tolerate the moratorium at the beginning. Meacham\* of CLVU thought that the public health risk from evicting people was so clear to everyone that it convinced them that the moratorium needed to happen. It certainly influenced Vasil’s\* approach to working with decision-makers at the beginning of the pandemic, which he described as: “we will bend over backwards to help find a way to help get us all through this because housing was the key—that was the only safe haven for people.” He said, “we were realistic in terms of understanding that the decision on a policy basis was gonna come from what’s going on with the virus.” Representative Honan\* felt that the need to socially distance people required extraordinary action, i.e., the moratorium.

Kriesberg\* of MACDC said there was confusion at the beginning of the pandemic about whether the moratorium was supposed to help people who lost their jobs and therefore could not pay rent or whether it was to stop the spread of the virus. He argued that the primary reason for the moratorium was for public health, which is why he still supported having a moratorium even after people began feeling some relief from unemployment benefits and federal stimulus checks.

### ***Large Scale Unemployment***

That there was confusion about the primary reason for the eviction moratorium makes clear that the scale of unemployment was still a motivating factor for many in supporting the moratorium. Two interviewees, Finfer\* and Shupin\*, felt that the scale of job loss was the main



reason that the eviction moratorium was passed. Finfer\* said that the inability of people to pay their rent due to job loss was what motivated members of MCAN to advocate for the moratorium. He felt that the sheer jump in unemployment numbers—between March and April of 2020, the number of unemployed in Massachusetts jumped from about 100,000 people to over 500,000 people (BLS, 2021)—provided the push for this new policy response. Shupin\* said that “the scale of the crisis was so large that like, it didn’t matter if they were opposed to it, like, this needed to happen, and that was clear, so I think that’s how it was able to get through.” He acknowledged that “evictions were happening at a terrible rate before COVID, [...] but with COVID this year, [the] scale of the problem just took off.”

***Public Perception: No Fault***

Another reason that the eviction moratorium was able to pass in Massachusetts is because people from both advocacy coalitions felt that a person’s inability to pay their rent during the pandemic was not their fault. Both Meacham\* of CLVU and Kriesberg\* of MACDC believed that prior to the pandemic, the public was more apt to believe that those getting evicted or foreclosed upon were in some part to blame for ending up in that situation. Meacham\* clarified that most housing justice advocates did not feel that way, but he believed that it was the dominant public view. For example, Kriesberg\* said that in 2008 during the Great Recession, some people believed that a foreclosure was the fault of the homeowner for taking out a bad loan. However, he did feel that some lessons learned from the Great Recession helped create more support for the moratorium. He said there was a bipartisan consensus that policymakers at the time had favored large banks and business interests over individuals, and they did not want to repeat the same mistakes.

Meacham\* and Kriesberg\* explained that during the pandemic, the public perception about who was at fault for an eviction quickly shifted. Whereas before, it was generally thought to be the fault of the person getting evicted, during the pandemic, it was generally thought that those who could not afford their rent were not to blame. Meacham\* thought this shift occurred because he thought that the pandemic made clearer what the fundamental morality of the situation was. Meacham\* and Kriesberg\* hypothesized that this shift in public view helped create an environment in which the moratorium could pass. Meacham\* said that even conservatives felt that something had to be done in response. Verifying whether public perception shifted with the pandemic is out of scope for this thesis, but interview responses demonstrate that many stakeholder groups in both advocacy coalitions saw those who were unable to pay their rent as not at fault.

Three of the six people I interviewed in the socially-motivated advocacy coalition said that people who had been laid off during COVID-19, such as hotel workers, could not be blamed for being unable to pay their rent during the pandemic (Kriesberg\*; Meacham\*; Shupin\*). Some members of the market-motivated advocacy coalition felt the same way. Quattrochi\* of MassLandlords told me that “the general sense is, yeah, if you are impacted by COVID, you shouldn’t be evicted.” He cited fairness as a reason why his organization chose not to oppose the eviction moratorium at the beginning: “we don’t wanna be on the side of advocating for renters to have to leave their homes in the middle of a pandemic just because they lost their job, because the state shut down their jobs, that’s very unfair.” While Turk\* did not specifically say that those unable to pay their rent were not at fault, he did express understanding towards those who were behind on rent and were unwilling to work with their landlords. As noted earlier, he explained that there was fear and confusion at the beginning of the pandemic, which made some tenants

hesitant to work out a payment plan with their landlords. In reference to this, he said, “a lot of times we want to place fault and blame, you know, I don’t know that there’s fault and blame here.”

### ***Little to Lose***

Some groups that were more negatively impacted by the moratorium—those representing landlords—had little to lose by supporting the moratorium at the beginning. Of course, many small landlords did not feel this way and felt pinched by the moratorium, but for medium and large landlords and those with subsidized tenants, it was not a heavy lift. First, at the beginning of the pandemic, they thought the moratorium would be short-lived (Kriesberg\*). They were therefore more likely to support it because they thought it would only be a month or two and then things would return to normal. Second, as described earlier, it was not hard for some of the larger landlords to support it whose tenants tended to have white-collar jobs, which could more easily accommodate working from home and therefore, were less likely to be lost due to the pandemic; in addition, some of the larger landlords had tenants that received rental subsidies, meaning that the government would cover a tenant’s rent if their income dropped to zero as long as the tenant re-certified.

A third reason why many landlords had little to lose by supporting the moratorium was because doing so was good public relations for them. They might have had more to lose had they strongly and publicly opposed the moratorium. They recognized it could hurt their image to support evicting people in the middle of a pandemic. Turk\* said, “most of the large property owners didn’t wanna be viewed as being in favor of eviction.” Housing court judges tended to feel the same way as the large property owners; Vasil\* told me that “housing court judges do not want to be painted as evil by putting people on the street in the middle of a pandemic [...]

they're parts of the community, and [...] you couldn't put people on the street—you just knew it was impossible.” Supporting the moratorium was not only good for landlords' public image, but it was good for their relationships with their tenants. Kriesberg\* said that telling tenants early on that they would not be evicted if they could not pay the rent was a straightforward message to prevent stress.

Fourth, many landlords would prefer working out a solution with a tenant rather than evicting them. As Turk\* noted, it is not generally in a landlord's interest to evict someone because there is a cost to having empty apartments (and presumably, new tenants would be harder to come by during a pandemic). He said that “an owner cannot function in their business model unless they have tenants.” This shows that owners clearly had an incentive to work things out with tenants. Turk\* added, “let's start with the premise, which I think often the other side of the argument doesn't recognize, [...] that nobody wants to evict anyone.” The representatives of landlord groups I spoke to expressed a desire to work with tenants to establish a payment plan, help them re-certify, or help them find rental assistance, even if it meant their rent payments would be delayed.

### ***Existing Momentum for Tenants' Rights***

Additional background context of the advocacy and political landscapes prior to the pandemic also helps explain why the eviction moratorium passed so quickly. First, as noted earlier, the housing justice groups in the socially-motivated advocacy coalition were already well-connected with both each other and certain legislators. They had also been advocating for other types of tenant protections prior to the pandemic. For example, Finfer\* and Meacham\* told me that a push for rent control in the months leading up to the pandemic gained the most traction the movement had had since 1994, when the ability for municipalities to implement and enforce

rent control was eliminated in a statewide ballot question. As part of the push for rent control, CLVU and other housing justice groups organized a rally on the steps of the State House in October 2019 (CLVU, 2019), and a legislative hearing in January 2020 on the proposed rent control bills garnered a large turnout at the State House (Finfer\*; Lisinski, 2020; Meacham\*). While the legislation was ultimately unsuccessful, the strong push and turnout could have created momentum for and increased public awareness of tenants' protections in Massachusetts, which the housing justice groups could use to build on that recent mobilization.

### **Why the Eviction Moratorium was not Extended in October 2020**

The eviction moratorium could have been extended in October by one of two methods: the Governor could have extended it, as was in his power to do through the original legislation, or the legislature, a Democratic veto-proof supermajority at the time (Ballotpedia, 2020), could have passed legislation to extend it, with or without the Governor's approval. Interviewees provided multiple reasons to explain why the moratorium was not extended by either the Democratically-controlled legislature or the Republican governor:

- Existence of federal moratorium through 2020
- Pending lawsuits against moratorium
- Power of real estate industry
- Deference for political reasons
- Death of Chief Justice Gants

### ***Existence of Federal Moratorium Through 2020***

Three interviewees said that the enactment of the federal eviction moratorium in September, which was at that point scheduled to last through the end of 2020, contributed to Governor Baker's decision not to extend the Massachusetts eviction moratorium (Kriesberg\*; Quattrochi\*; Shupin\*). It allowed him to appease people by saying that there would still be some protections in place against evictions, although not as many as the Massachusetts moratorium.

Additionally, Kriesberg\* speculated that the fact that the federal moratorium did not come from the Governor may have been a motivating factor. He explained that the Governor had been under pressure from landlords who were unhappy with the statewide moratorium and others who were displeased with his mask mandate and lockdowns, so the federal moratorium probably relieved some of that pressure. Interestingly, Kriesberg\* initially thought the federal moratorium would convince the Governor to extend the statewide moratorium, reasoning that he might as well keep the Massachusetts one if there was going to be a federal moratorium through the end of the year anyways. Clearly, the opposite occurred.

### ***Pending Lawsuits Against the Moratorium***

Three interviewees believed that the lawsuits filed against Massachusetts' eviction moratorium were a major reason why Governor Baker did not extend the moratorium beyond October 17 (Quattrochi\*; Shupin\*; Vasil\*). Two of those three referenced Judge Wolf's opinion in the federal court case—which emphasized that the moratorium should be seen as temporary and could lose constitutional standing if further extended—as a particular influence on him and his legal team (Shupin\*; Vasil\*). Vasil\* of GBREB, who was in conversations with the Governor's office, said that the Governor's legal counsel did not want to push too hard against Judge Wolf's opinion and risk further legal action down the road.

### ***Power of Real Estate Industry***

Four different interviewees believed that pressure from the real estate industry convinced Governor Baker not to extend the statewide eviction moratorium (Kriesberg\*; Meacham\*; Shupin\*; Webster-Smith\*). In fact, two of those interviewees—the ones who represented groups in the Homes for All coalition, Meacham\* of CLVU and Webster-Smith\* of SNOL—believed that it was the main reason why the eviction moratorium was not extended. The Governor had

been receiving criticism from landlords and the real estate industry (Kriesberg\*; Meacham\*). This was a problem for the Governor because according to Meacham\*, the real estate industry is one of Governor Baker's allies, donating lots of money to him in elections. Additionally, "corporations are in Governor Baker's pocket," according to Webster-Smith\*. She added that many Massachusetts legislators are landlords—something I was unable to verify with a second source—which, if true, could have influenced the legislature not to pass additional legislation to extend the moratorium, or put pressure on the Governor to extend it. Additionally, the real estate industry appeared to have more influence in the Governor's office than grassroots organizations. While Governor Baker met with many different stakeholders, including landlords, while planning for what would happen after the moratorium ended, some of those in the socially-motivated coalition, like Representative Connolly and SNOL, felt left out of those talks (Connolly, 2020; Webster-Smith\*).

It is important to note that not all interviewees agreed with the assessment that the real estate industry held all the power and influence. Quattrochi\* actually felt that landlords had less power than tenants in Massachusetts due to simple numbers. While I did not verify this with another source, he said that single-family homeowners have the most votes in Massachusetts, followed by tenants, then landlords, meaning landlords as a group have the fewest votes. It is likely true that homeowners have more votes than renters, given that 62.4% of units in Massachusetts are owner-occupied (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a), and that renters provide a greater share of votes than landlords, but this does not necessarily mean that renters have more policy influence than landlords. In fact, homeowners might see their interests aligned more with property owners, a group that includes landlords, and not with tenants. Quattrochi\* also said that landlords have a lot of expenses and do not give a lot of money to politicians. This differs from

Meacham's\* claim that the real estate industry donates a lot of money to Governor Baker. The difference could be that the real estate industry that Meacham\* referred to is perhaps composed of larger corporations and developers, whereas the landlords that Quattrochi\* referred to are landlords with fewer units, including "mom and pop" landlords. Quattrochi\* felt that because landlords, in his view, did not tend to donate much or offer many votes, state legislators have little incentive to work with them. For example, he felt that Representative Connolly did little to engage with landlords and single-family homeowners because he had no need to: he had a core group of renters who vote for him every election, according to Quattrochi\*. He attributed this dynamic to why Representative Connolly put forward legislation that Quattrochi\* saw as reflective of the renters' perspective only. However, this could also be because Connolly was representing his district, which includes Cambridge and Somerville, cities with a high proportion of tenants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019b). This shows that not all landlords recognize the power and influence that they as property owners have.

### ***Deference for Political Reasons***

Another reason for the expiration of the moratorium, though mentioned by fewer interviewees, was deference of some groups to others for political reasons. The first example of this deference is in the way Democratic legislators tend to play off the Republican governor to meet their own political needs. Kriesberg\* explained that for much of the last 30 years, Massachusetts has had a heavily Democratic legislature and a Republican governor. He believes that the Democratic legislature sometimes uses the Republican governor as an excuse not to throw their support behind something. The Democratic legislators may be more conservative than they are willing to let on to their constituents, but are politically able to avoid supporting a progressive policy because they know it will not have the backing of the Governor (Kriesberg\*).



The legislature demonstrated this deference to the Governor when they gave him the power to extend the moratorium; they could have passed legislation that did not require his approval for an extension. Shupin\* believes this is why the legislature did not push back against the Governor once he announced he did not plan to extend the moratorium, saying “they wouldn’t have given the Governor that discretion in the first place if they wanted to be the ones to say when and if it would end.”

Interestingly, both Kriesberg\* and Shupin\*, who mentioned this political context, worked for organizations that showed the same deference. Both CHAPA and MACDC pulled back from actively fighting for the alternative—the Housing Stability Act—once they realized they lost the support of the Governor for an extension. Instead, they focused their efforts on getting as much as they could out of the EDI. There are some additional reasons that explain this. For one, Kriesberg\* said that MACDC is somewhat constrained in their ability to push, since they want to maintain the relationships they already have with key agency heads, and not be disinvited from meetings. Also, CHAPA is seen as a more centrist group compared to other housing groups in Massachusetts (Quattrochi\*).

A second example of this deference took place within the socially-motivated advocacy coalition. Kriesberg\* thought that a shorter extension of the moratorium might have been possible to negotiate had there not been an “all or nothing” mentality amongst many of the housing justice groups in their advocacy for the extension of the moratorium into 2022. However, a desire to keep the socially-motivated advocacy coalition together took precedence over advocating for a shorter extension of the moratorium. MACDC was hesitant to suggest a shorter alternative because they did not want to appear to undermine the efforts of the groups who were pushing for an extension into 2022 with the Housing Stability Act (Kriesberg\*). He

said, “there was no room in the political landscape to do that,” but thinks that if there had been more trust and better communication in the housing community to go after two different goals, they might have achieved at least a more modest extension.

### ***Death of Chief Justice Gants***

As noted earlier, some groups in the socially-motivated coalition felt left out of Governor Baker’s planning discussions. One of the grassroots organizations, SNOL, said they were excluded from that process after the death of Chief Justice Gants in September. Webster-Smith\* directly linked that omission to the expiration of the moratorium and what she viewed as an insufficient plan to protect tenants: “we weren’t invited into that space after Judge Gants passed away, which is why we ended up with a lifting of the moratorium with a plan that was in name-only.” Finfer\* also said that after Chief Justice Gants passed, the process that the Chief Justice had started to prepare the courts for the end of the moratorium continued, but not as well without his leadership.

### **Coalition Belief Systems**

Since the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) posits that policy change comes about by actors who want to see their beliefs come to fruition, rather than by actors making rational decisions (Brooks, 2018), I used interview data to identify the belief systems of each advocacy coalition. The ACF groups beliefs into three types: deep core beliefs, policy core beliefs, and secondary beliefs. Deep core beliefs are like core values; they are fundamental beliefs that are not related to a specific policy and are not easily changed, like a religious belief. Policy core beliefs include how a person thinks their values should be reflected in the policy subsystem being studied, and their understanding of the causes of, seriousness of, and solutions for the policy problem. Secondary beliefs go into greater detail about how a person thinks the policy is

working or should be implemented. I drew on Jenkins-Smith et al. (2018), Sabatier (1993), and Munro (1993) to develop the above definitions and belief categories below. The results of my analysis are in Table 4.

### ***Deep Core Beliefs***

**Priority of Values.** As noted earlier, interviewees in the socially-motivated advocacy coalition supported the eviction moratorium for two main reasons: to protect public health and to protect those who lost their jobs due to COVID-19. Therefore, the values they prioritized were public health and material standards of living. They wanted to ensure people met one of their basic needs: housing. Interviewees in the market-motivated advocacy coalition also valued public health, though to a lesser extent. Their prioritization of public health is shown in their lack of significant resistance to the moratorium at the beginning because they understood that the moratorium was needed to protect public health. However, they valued public health to a lesser extent because they supported the expiration of the moratorium in the middle of a COVID-19 surge. Interviewees in this advocacy coalition showed that they placed a high value on business interests because their main argument for opposing the moratorium was that the moratorium was preventing landlords from conducting their business in that they had to continue to provide housing while not being paid in some cases for the mortgage and maintenance costs associated with it. They felt that their business, providing housing, was a service to the community, and that they should be allowed to continue to operate with their business model in order to keep society functioning by providing housing, keeping small landlords in business, and ensuring that mortgages were paid.

**Table 4**

*Advocacy Coalition Belief Systems*

	<b>Belief Category</b>	<b>Socially-Motivated Advocacy Coalition</b>	<b>Market-Motivated Advocacy Coalition</b>
<b>Deep Core Beliefs</b>	<i>Priority of values</i>	Priority is placed on public health and material standards of living.	Priority is placed on business interests and to a lesser extent public health.
	<i>Basic criteria of distributive justice</i>	Distribute power and resources to those who have been systemically excluded.	Maintain existing power and resources.
<b>Policy Core Beliefs</b>	<i>Proper scope of governmental vs. market activity</i>	The market, left alone, disadvantages many people. The government needs to intervene to correct for it.	The market should work as it is supposed to. The government should intervene when it imposes other restrictions that limit the market's functioning.
	<i>Social groups whose welfare is most critical</i>	Tenants, small landlords, low-income individuals, people of color.	Private property owners, business owners.
	<i>Basic policy mechanisms</i>	Legislation is needed to get everyone to comply. Large-scale investments needed.	Let court system (where property rights mean that landowners have the advantage) handle evictions. Large-scale investments needed.
	<i>Seriousness of eviction</i>	Evictions are traumatic and have a disproportionate impact on people of color. Tend to support ending all no-fault evictions.	Want to avoid evictions because they hurt both tenant and business. Want to be able to evict for violations of lease and risks to health and safety.
	<i>Profitability</i>	Prioritize people over profit.	Prioritize business interests and profitability.
<b>Secondary Beliefs</b>	<i>Cost/benefit ratio of extending the moratorium</i>	The benefits to tenants outweigh the costs to landlords.	The costs to landlords outweigh the benefits to tenants.
	<i>Impact of extending eviction moratorium</i>	Protects public health and prevents a disaster for tenants who, among wage owners, have disproportionately lost income due to COVID-19.	Hurts landlords who need to pay their mortgage and expenses; infringes on private property rights and right to go to court.
	<i>Adequacy of tenant protections</i>	More tenant protections are needed.	Tenants already have an abundance of protections and support; no more are needed.

**Basic Criteria of Distributive Justice.** Members of the socially-motivated advocacy coalition demonstrated in interviews that they believed in providing power and resources to those who have been traditionally excluded. One example that demonstrates they believed this is their view that the push for the eviction moratorium was a racial justice issue. Meacham\* pointed out that evictions have a disproportionate effect on communities of color and said that is why protesters carry signs that say “racial justice = housing justice.” Representative Honan\* said that the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color in Massachusetts was another reason to support the eviction moratorium. Another reason that shows that this advocacy coalition prioritized redistributing power and resources is because their efforts around the moratorium were focused on protecting tenants, a group that tends to have less power and wealth than landlords. For example, Meacham\* brought up the fact that landlords are disproportionately represented by lawyers; in 2019, landlords were represented nearly 80% of the time in Massachusetts’ Housing Court eviction cases, whereas tenants were only represented less than 9% of the time (Caramello et al., 2019). Additionally, renters tend to have lower incomes than homeowners (Choi et al., 2020), and the average American has about four times less wealth than business owners and landlords (Van Dam, 2018). Non-property owners have been excluded throughout U.S. history; when the country was first formed and voting rights were left up to each state legislature, most states only allowed property owners who were also male, white, and over 21 to vote (Library of Congress, n.d.). Also, the socially-motivated advocacy coalition felt that their opposition had more money and therefore influence than they did; Meacham\* said that the real estate industry spends a lot of money in elections. Finally, whereas the rights of property owners are protected in the fifth amendment of the U.S. constitution, interviews showed that tenants have been fighting for a long time for more protections, as demonstrated by the pushes

for rent control and ending no-fault evictions in Massachusetts (Finfer\*; Meacham\*; Webster-Smith\*).

Alternatively, the market-motivated advocacy coalition prioritized justice for those who made investments and expected to see a return on them, who happened to be people who already have a certain level of power, resources, and who already have significant advantages from the housing system. The market-motivated advocacy coalition did not want landlords to lose the property and resources they already had. This is shown in their advocacy either against the moratorium or for additional measures and funding that would protect landlords. By virtue of owning rental property, most landlords already have some wealth and capital, have existing constitutional protections, and are already active participants in the market economy. Even landlords who rent to tenants with subsidies through Section 8 vouchers participate in the market economy; in fact, Section 8 was created as a market alternative to public housing (Schwartz, 2015). In interviews, the market-motivated advocacy coalition demonstrated a focus on getting landlords their expected return on investment which they had been receiving before the pandemic. As noted in the Findings chapter, both Turk\* and Quattrochi\* emphasized how landlords needed the rent to cover their many expenses. The fact that they wanted to receive what they had been getting before the pandemic shows that they wanted to maintain their business and existing resources.

### ***Policy Core Beliefs***

**Proper Scope of Governmental vs. Market Activity.** Advocates in the socially-motivated advocacy coalition believed that the market-based housing system disadvantaged many people and wanted more government intervention to improve it. Meacham\* explained that tenant advocacy groups believed that the market did not produce fair or moral results and

thought, as did Shupin\*, that a housing crisis already existed before the pandemic. That is why the housing justice groups had been advocating for some form of government intervention in the housing market ever since rent control was banned in Massachusetts (Meacham\*). The advocacy coalition saw the pandemic as an additional opportunity to revise the system for the better; for example, Webster-Smith\* said, “how do we take this moment now and create a new normal. And not go back to normal, which wasn’t working for the majority of people.” One way that the socially-motivated advocacy coalition attempted to have the government intervene in the housing market to protect tenants was in their inclusion of a provision in the Housing Stability Act that would have frozen rents at March 2020 levels. While the Act was ultimately unsuccessful, the provision would have prevented landlords from charging a market-based rent of their choosing.

In contrast, the market-motivated advocacy coalition demonstrated through interviews that their goal was to return the housing market economy to the way it was before the pandemic, which meant little government intervention. Meacham\* offered evidence that the market-motivated advocacy coalition opposed government intervention in the market, saying that the real estate industry has blocked initiatives that would have increased government intervention in the housing market, including opposing the moratorium on foreclosures, because he said they believed that the market would produce a fair result. It is not clear if all groups in the market-motivated advocacy coalition opposed the foreclosure moratorium, but Quattrochi\* did say that MassLandlords opposes rent control, another example of government intervention in the housing market. The market-motivated advocacy coalition did align with the socially-motivated advocacy coalition in wanting rental assistance to cover the rent for those who could not pay, but rental assistance would still perpetuate the market-based system, in which landlords would continue to charge a market-based rent and be paid for it, whether by the tenant or with government funds.

Quattrochi\* demonstrated his support for this approach when he said: “if the economy can keep working with rental assistance, the rental economy, then everything should work itself out.” This quote also shows a desire to return to the way things were before the pandemic.

**Social Groups Whose Welfare is Most Critical.** As noted in the description of each advocacy coalition’s views on distributive justice, the socially-motivated advocacy coalition prioritized those who had been traditionally excluded from having power and resources and the market-motivated advocacy coalition prioritized the maintenance of resources for those who already had them. This meant that the socially-motivated advocacy coalition prioritized tenants, small landlords, low-income individuals, and people of color. They saw themselves as representing a broad swath of people. Both Meacham\* and Webster-Smith\* said that their organizations advocated for small landlords, Meacham\* because they supported the foreclosure moratorium, and Webster-Smith\* because SNOL does not distinguish between renters and homeowners; they call both groups tenants, the former because they rent from landlords, the latter because they are tenants of the bank. Interestingly, the market-motivated advocacy coalition also felt they prioritized small landlords; for example, both the state and federal lawsuit against the eviction moratorium were filed by small landlords, and MassLandlords was particularly concerned about protecting “mom and pop” landlords from going out of business (Quattrochi\*). The market-motivated advocacy coalition also demonstrated that they cared about the welfare of tenants in their lack of serious opposition to the eviction moratorium at the beginning of the pandemic, but ultimately, they prioritized the welfare of private property owners in their advocacy efforts in the summer and fall. This is shown in their main argument against the moratorium, which was that landlords should not bear the responsibility of providing housing without compensation because of a pandemic they did not cause. Owning a rental



property can be considered either an investment or a business depending on how it is used (Fishman, n.d.), which is why the market-motivated advocacy coalition's support for landlords also means they prioritized business owners.

**Basic Policy Mechanisms.** The socially-motivated advocacy coalition felt that the best policy mechanism for protecting tenants during the pandemic was through legislation, including legislation that would provide significant government funding to help renters. That is shown in their advocacy for the moratorium and for additional legislation, the Housing Stability Act, to protect renters. They preferred legislation over allowing the system to run as it had before, which would have meant letting landlords work out the situation or take a tenant to court, where a judge would decide the case. The housing justice groups showed a distrust that all landlords would fairly work with tenants, as demonstrated by the example I shared earlier of bullying landlords (Webster-Smith\*). They also did not trust the courts to fairly address the situation, given the uneven representation between landlords and tenants that Meacham\* brought up. In contrast, the market-motivated advocacy coalition showed a preference for using the courts as a policy mechanism to address evictions, arguing, as described earlier in Findings, that the courts could help mediate a solution or connect tenants to rental assistance. The market-motivated advocacy coalition overlapped somewhat with the socially-motivated advocacy coalition in that they also supported significant government funding, like MassLandlords' surety bond proposal, to cover the rents of people who could not afford it due to COVID-19. It is here where they did want some form of government intervention because as Turk\* said, "don't put the burden on private property owners, right, if we as a society believe that people should not be evicted during a global pandemic."

**Seriousness of Eviction.** Neither advocacy coalition wanted in general to evict people, but they differed on the reasons why. The socially-motivated advocacy coalition tended to look more at the longer term effects of eviction on the tenant. For example, Webster-Smith\* talked about how people who had been through an eviction before did not want to go through that process again, presumably because it was so trying, and, as noted earlier, Meacham\* brought up how communities of color were disproportionately impacted by the housing crisis. Those in the Homes for All coalition, a sub-group of the socially-motivated advocacy coalition, supported ending all no-fault evictions, which are different from evictions for non-payment of rent (Meacham\*; Webster-Smith\*). The socially-motivated advocacy coalition believed that there had been an affordable housing crisis, which ties closely to evictions, before the pandemic, during the pandemic and they believed it would continue as an issue after the pandemic (Meacham\*; Shupin\*). Members of the market-motivated advocacy coalition also told me they did not want to evict tenants, but their reasoning differed in that part of it was because evictions hurt business for landlords; it is not cost effective for them to have vacant units (Turk\*). Of course, members of the market-motivated advocacy coalition and even some in the socially-motivated advocacy coalition, like the community development corporations (Kriesberg\*), did want to be able to evict tenants for violations of the lease and for threatening the public health and safety of others (Quattrochi\*; Turk\*).

**Profitability.** As described earlier, the socially-motivated advocacy coalition felt that the market-based housing system needed to change, and a major reason for that was because they objected to the idea of displacing people for profit. Meacham\*, for example, thinks that flipping a building in a short amount of time to make profit is “transparently immoral.” However, members of the market-motivated advocacy coalition I spoke with would probably say that profit

did not motivate their decision to oppose the moratorium. For example, many of them were willing to take the hit for a short amount of time at the beginning of the pandemic because they understood the severity of the problem (Quattrochi\*; Vasil\*). Turk\* also felt that rent did not bring in profit, it covered expenses. However, the idea that real estate can be used for profit is part of this advocacy coalition's worldview. As described earlier, they tended to support the market-based housing system, which allows people to profit from owning and renting out housing. Even if rent simply covers the mortgage and expenses for a landlord, property owners get the equity they put into their property, which tenants do not benefit from, and they have the opportunity to gain wealth through property values, which tend to rise over time, as they have especially quickly in the Greater Boston region. One example from the interviews that shows how profitability is part of this advocacy coalition's belief system is that profitability is listed as part of the mission of MassLandlords, although Quattrochi\* acknowledged he wanted to remove the focus on it because the group has some non-profit member landlords. And Meacham\*, part of the socially-motivated advocacy coalition, said that the real estate industry views profit as the only goal and that the industry believes it is acceptable to evict for no fault, such as when doing a building clear-out, to make money.

### *Secondary Beliefs*

**Cost/Benefit Ratio of Extending the Eviction Moratorium.** The socially-motivated advocacy coalition felt that the benefit that the eviction moratorium had on so many tenants far outweighed the cost to landlords. This is shown in their push to extend it in the summer and fall. They of course still understood the cost that it had on landlords, which is why they advocated for additional protections for landlords, but they prioritized the renters. The market-motivated advocacy coalition for the most part felt that the cost of the eviction moratorium on landlords

outweighed the benefits for tenants. While they may have sided with the socially-motivated advocacy coalition's cost/benefit analysis in the early days of the pandemic, when they did not seriously oppose the moratorium, their interview responses show that during the summer and fall of 2020, their calculation changed. They described the high costs of the moratorium on landlords: providing "free rent," maintenance, and extra cleaning (Quattrochi\*; Turk\*). Their opposition to the moratorium later on shows that they focused most on the costs to them. Many did want to help tenants, but their priority was advocating for themselves and their own costs.

**Impact of Extending Eviction Moratorium.** Interviews showed that the socially-motivated advocacy coalition viewed an extension of the moratorium as about disaster prevention. They wanted to prevent the spread of COVID-19 that they believed would happen when people left their homes and moved in with others (Kriesberg\*; Meacham\*; Webster-Smith\*), and avoid what they believed would be a wave of evictions, especially because they did not think that rental assistance through RAFT would be able to be distributed fast enough to prevent some evictions from taking place (Meacham\*; Webster-Smith\*). Alternatively, the market-motivated advocacy coalition framed the impact of extending the moratorium mostly in terms of how it hurt landlords: that it was an unfair burden that prevented their ability to pay their mortgage and expenses, and infringed on both their private property rights and right to go to court. Two members of the market-motivated advocacy coalition in interviews described the additional cost burdens on landlords due to the moratorium (Quattrochi\*; Turk\*). Vasil\* and Turk\* both referenced the right to go to court as a reason to oppose the moratorium, which was also an argument in the legal cases against the moratorium. The infringement on property rights was another argument used in the lawsuits, and Turk\* demonstrated he felt like the eviction

moratorium unfairly targeted property owners when he said: “don’t put the burden on private property owners.”

**Adequacy of Tenant Protections.** The socially-motivated advocacy coalition felt that Massachusetts needed additional tenant protections. For example, two interviewees mentioned how their organizations wanted to end no-fault evictions (Meacham\*; Webster-Smith\*), and two talked about the push for rent control in Massachusetts (Finfer\*; Meacham\*). In contrast, the market-motivated advocacy coalition tended to oppose adding more tenant protections in Massachusetts. For example, Quattrochi\* shared results of polls conducted with MassLandlords members showing that they opposed rent control. The organization also wanted to add some landlord protections to an existing law that protects tenants, in which tenants can withhold rent when the landlord does not keep the property inhabitable (Quattrochi\*).

### ***Fractions Within Advocacy Coalitions***

While united by general belief systems, there were certainly divisions within each of the advocacy coalitions. At the beginning of the pandemic, some groups in the market-motivated advocacy coalition tolerated the eviction moratorium, like MassLandlords, and the Governor, who signed the legislation, whereas others in the same advocacy coalition completely opposed it, like SPOA. The socially-motivated advocacy coalition exhibited fractures later that year. Some groups in the advocacy coalition advocated heavily for an extension of the moratorium and the Housing Stability Act, whereas other groups, like MACDC and CHAPA, let up on some of that advocacy once they realized the Governor had made a decision not to extend the moratorium. This can be explained because MACDC is composed of landlords, and because both groups had relationships at many levels of government that they did not want to push too hard against.

## **Social Construction of Landlords and Tenants**

In this section, I use the social construction of target populations framework to map out how each advocacy coalition viewed themselves and each other, including how they viewed their own and each other's power. While the advocacy coalitions are not neatly divided between tenants and landlords, I decided to use tenants and landlords as the target populations studied in this analysis. This is because interviewees described in particular how tenants and landlords were viewed. By using this framework, I can help illuminate each advocacy coalition's worldview as an addition to the analysis on belief systems just conducted.

### ***How Landlords are Viewed***

The socially-motivated advocacy coalition tended to view landlords as already having outside access to influence decision-makers at the state level, whether through election donations or existing connections, and more power in that they were much more likely to be represented in eviction cases than tenants. One participant in this advocacy coalition did anecdotally speak of landlords who bullied their tenants, but there was only one mention of it. However, the advocacy coalition still viewed smaller landlords as deserving of assistance, as demonstrated by its inclusion of protections for small landlords in the Housing Stability Act.

Interviewees in the market-motivated advocacy coalition emphasized that landlords are “ordinary people trying to do the right thing” (Quattrochi\*) who wanted to come together to find a solution to a difficult problem (Quattrochi\*; Vasil\*). Because they provided a service—safe, clean rental housing—to the community, they felt they deserved support in order to provide said service (Quattrochi\*). However, the market-motivated advocacy coalition felt that landlords were misunderstood by both the socially-motivated advocacy coalition and the media. For example, Vasil\* said that “tenants’ advocates love to paint owners as evil;” Turk\* talked about

how “the other side” does not recognize that landlords do not want to evict people; and Quattrochi\* explained that while people may view a landlord as a “stereotypical rich person,” landlords actually have a lot of expenses. Of course, one can have wealth and still have many expenses. Turk\* believed that media coverage of landlords misrepresented them, saying that eviction moratorium coverage in newspapers was depicted as “us vs. them” with “the big, bad landlord.” Vasil\* also felt that some, though not all, media outlets failed to provide a balanced perspective on the eviction moratorium debate. Additionally, as described earlier, Quattrochi\* believed that landlords were underrepresented in terms of electoral votes, which in his view meant that they held less sway with elected officials.

### *How Tenants are Viewed*

As explained earlier, the socially-motivated advocacy coalition prioritized the rights of tenants. They saw tenants as a group worthy of protection. They described instances of tenants feeling stressed or overwhelmed because they could not pay the rent or were faced with an illegal eviction, and believed that tenants wanted to work things out with landlords, but were sometimes prevented from doing so because the rental assistance process was slow or they did not understand how the eviction process worked (Meacham\*; Webster-Smith\*). Most members of the socially-motivated advocacy coalition I spoke with felt that the tenant perspective was adequately represented in media coverage of the eviction moratorium (Finfer\*; Kriesberg\*; Shupin\*; Webster-Smith\*). This advocacy coalition also believed that tenants were not to blame for being unable to pay their rent during the pandemic because they had lost their jobs, and some parts of the advocacy coalition had even felt that way before the pandemic (Meacham\*).

Members of the market-motivated advocacy coalition expressed a desire to help tenants and work out a solution with them before getting to eviction (Quattrochi\*; Turk\*; Vasil\*), but

interviews showed that members of this advocacy coalition also had some distrust of tenants. The anecdotal stories about the fireworks, boat, and Airbnb rentals that members of this advocacy coalition shared, which were described in an earlier section about opposition to extending the moratorium, show that members of this advocacy coalition felt like a small number of tenants were trying to take advantage of them. Additionally, in his interview, Quattrochi\* brought up the so-called “free rent trick,” in which tenants supposedly purposefully damage their apartment in order to withhold rent under a Massachusetts law; he said there were about 300 repeat cases of this in 2017. He believed that these tenants purposefully damaged their apartment because they could not afford rent, not because the apartment was in bad condition. These examples of distrust show that the market-motivated advocacy coalition viewed some tenants as deserving, but not all.

### ***Social Construction and Power Typology***

Based on this analysis of each advocacy coalition’s views on tenants and landlords, I created a social construction and power matrix, Figure 5, to visually represent how landlords and tenants at risk of eviction are viewed. While the market-motivated advocacy coalition tended to believe that landlords were viewed as undeserving by the socially-motivated advocacy coalition and even society, given their reactions to media coverage of the eviction moratorium, I placed them in between positive and negative constructions depending on the size of the landlord. Schneider et al. (2014) say that small business owners and taxpayers tend to have a positive construction, whereas big corporations tend to have a negative construction. Therefore, small landlords have more of a positive construction, especially given that the socially-motivated advocacy coalition wanted to support them, whereas large landlords have more of a negative construction, as demonstrated by the socially-motivated advocacy coalition’s more negative



views on the real estate industry overall. I placed landlords in a high power category. Even though Quattrochi\* felt that landlords had less power than tenants since there are fewer landlords than tenants, they tend to have more access to resources (Caramello et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2020; Van Dam, 2018), property rights are protected in the U.S. constitution, and other interviews showed that they have more connections to decision-makers than tenants. Interviews demonstrated that tenants at risk of eviction were previously seen as undeserving by society but were seen as deserving once the pandemic started if they had lost their jobs due to COVID-19. This was explained in the previous section on why the eviction moratorium passed so quickly. The arrow in Figure 5 shows that shift in mindset. I placed tenants at risk of eviction in the low power category because they have limited resources.

**Figure 5**

*Social Construction and Power Typology of Tenants and Landlords*

	Positive Construction (“Deserving”)	Negative Construction (“Undeserving”)
High Power	Landlords	
Low Power	Tenants at risk of eviction <i>(during pandemic)</i>	Tenants at risk of eviction <i>(pre-pandemic)</i>

*Note.* Matrix is adapted from Schneider et al. (2014).

## **Chapter 6: Discussion**

In this chapter, I examine how the ACF and SCTP can help explain why the eviction moratorium passed and why it was not extended six months later. Before doing so, it is important to consider whether the eviction moratorium's passage and subsequent expiration actually constitutes a policy change. I believe it constitutes a short-term, or episodic, policy change, but not a long-term policy change, given its expiration six months after passage. It was a policy change because it provided a type of protections for tenants that had not been seen in the U.S. before, especially since homeowners have traditionally been favored in U.S. housing policy. It also prevented the market-based rental system from operating freely; the latest major example of that in Massachusetts was rent control, which was abolished thirty years before. However, it was not a long-term policy change because it ended so quickly, and the housing system returned to the way it was before, with the only addition of rental assistance, which perpetuated the same market-based housing system as before.

### **Advocacy Coalition Framework**

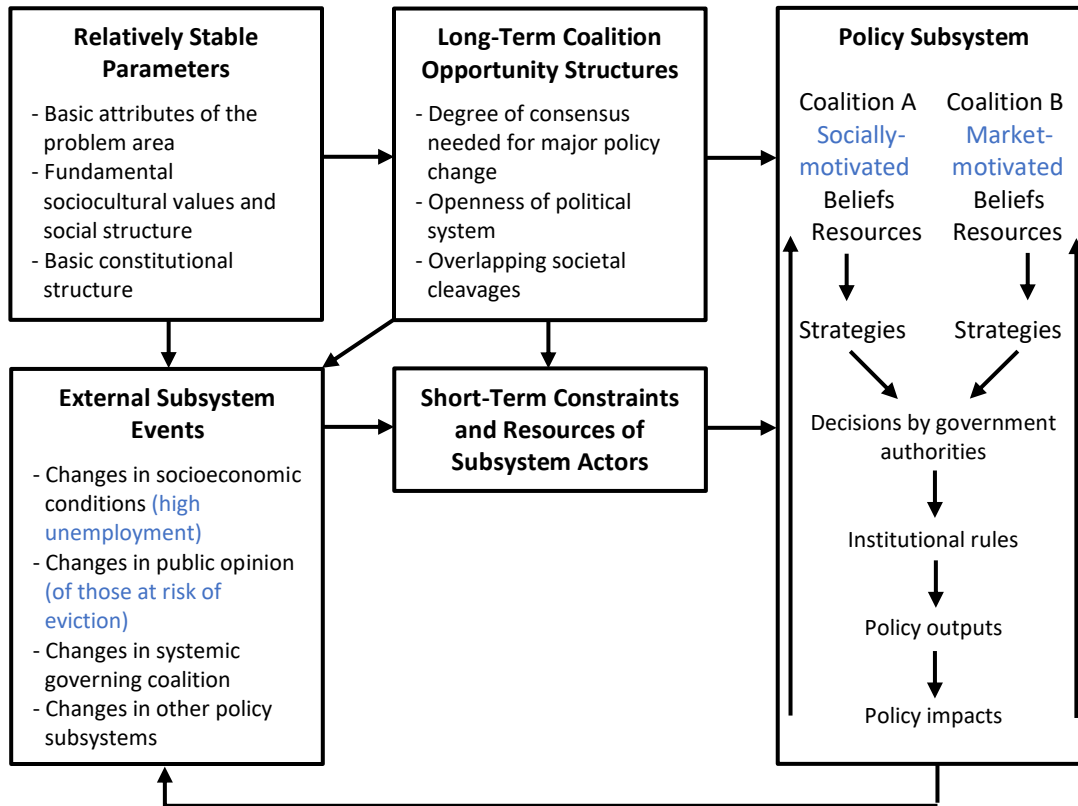
To see how the ACF can be used to explain this particular shift in housing policy, I considered the various components of the ACF flow diagram, which I annotated in Figure 6.

#### ***External Subsystem Events***

The ACF says that there are four pathways to policy change. The first is due to an external event like a change in socioeconomic conditions, the second is due to internal events like scandals or fiascos within advocacy coalitions, the third is due to policy-oriented learning, which usually occurs over a longer period of time, and the fourth is due to a negotiation made between two adversarial advocacy coalitions (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018).

**Figure 6**

*The Advocacy Coalition Framework Flow Diagram, Annotated*



*Note.* Adapted from Jenkins-Smith et al. (2018) and annotated by author.

It is easy to rule out the second, third, and fourth pathways as explanations for the passage of the statewide eviction moratorium in Massachusetts. First, the analysis did not reveal any major disturbances internal to either advocacy coalition. Second, there was little evidence of policy-oriented learning, in which actors learn something new and change their beliefs. Third, the findings show that the advocacy coalitions did not negotiate with each other, but rather with the connections they had in the legislature or executive offices, like the Governor's office or Mayor of Boston's office. The remaining pathway to policy change that could potentially explain why Massachusetts passed a new type of housing policy, the eviction moratorium, is the existence of an external event.

As seen in Figure 6, the external event could be a change in socioeconomic conditions, a change in public opinion, a change in the systemic governing advocacy coalition, or a change in other policy subsystems (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). In this case study, it is clear that the external event is the pandemic and the resulting high unemployment rates, which caused people to lose their jobs and income. However, interviews show that a shift in public opinion also likely occurred, and therefore could also be considered a secondary external event. The interviews revealed that as a result of the pandemic, those who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 were seen as not at fault for being unable to pay their rent, whereas before society may have been more likely to blame them for the situation they were in. It is easier to rule out a change in the governing advocacy coalition as the external event. The commonwealth was led by a Republican governor and a Democratic legislature, as it had been for almost thirty years, with a few exceptions, such as Democratic Governor Deval Patrick from 2007–2015. Finally, interviews did not reveal any changes in other policy subsystems. While there had been minor trends in the housing policy subsystem that the advocacy coalitions were already a part of, such as the push towards rent control, interviewees did not mention any changes to other policy areas that impacted their own.

The two explanations of both a shift in socioeconomic conditions from the pandemic and a change in the way the people viewed people at risk for eviction can help explain why the moratorium passed at the beginning of the pandemic. This is boosted by the interview responses that showed that the two main reasons that people agreed to support or at least tolerate the moratorium was because they understood of the severity of the problem, how it would impact so many people, and that those people were not to blame for the situation they found themselves in.

However, Jenkins-Smith et al. (2018) caution that an external event alone does not cause policy change. This is supported by the fact that the pandemic impacted every state in the U.S., yet not every state implemented an eviction moratorium. There had to be other reasons specific to Massachusetts that allowed the eviction moratorium to pass. Additionally, the external event (the pandemic) only caused an episodic change, not a significant policy change. Jenkins-Smith et al. (2018) say the external event must be paired with additional occurrences, such as increased public and political attention on the issue or a redistribution of advocacy coalition resources. In this case, the advocacy coalitions did indeed work to get more public attention on the issue. For example, interviews revealed that the media shed light on the plight of tenants. Both advocacy coalitions also dropped the other advocacy issues they had been working on before the pandemic in order to focus on this issue, such as how the socially-motivated advocacy coalition had gained some momentum before the pandemic around rent control but then had to pivot to fighting for the eviction moratorium and related tenant protections.

### *Advocacy Coalition Strategies*

The flow diagram of the ACF in Figure 6 shows that each advocacy coalition strategizes on how to push for their beliefs and get their plan in front of government authorities, who make the final decision on implementing the policy. While I asked interviewees about the advocacy strategies they used to push for their position, I did not find evidence that the strategies they used were more or less effective than others or that a particular strategy significantly helped or hindered them. Rather, both advocacy coalitions used similar advocacy strategies: encouraging their members to call legislators, meeting with their connections in the government if they had them, and publishing information online. The one strategy that seemed to help the socially-motivated coalition with the passage of the moratorium was their pretty close communication

amongst all the groups, meaning they met regularly; this was partially due to the existing efforts to launch a Homes for All coalition. However, the communication amongst groups was not perfect because Kriesberg\* said that better communication and trust between the groups might have resulted in an ability to get a compromise on an extension of the moratorium.

### ***Makeup of Advocacy Coalitions***

I examined whether the makeup of the advocacy coalitions can help explain the policy change or lack thereof. Jenkins-Smith et al. (2018) say that organizing actors into advocacy coalitions is useful for understanding the degree of coordination within and between advocacy coalitions. Interview findings show that the socially-motivated advocacy coalition was not as strong internally as it seemed to be at the beginning of the pandemic, which could have contributed to its failure in getting the moratorium extended. At the beginning of the pandemic, the Homes for All coalition, part of the socially-motivated advocacy coalition, had already been connected with each other, so they were able to maintain constant communication when pushing for the passage of the moratorium. They also leveraged existing ties with legislators which meant they were pulled early into conversations about the moratorium. These characteristics may have helped with the passage of the moratorium. However, later on, CHAPA and MACDC stopped actively pushing for the Housing Stability Act once they realized the Governor was not going to extend the moratorium. This shows that the advocacy coalition was not fully united in its strategy, which could have contributed to its failure.

### ***Belief Systems***

The annotated ACF flow diagram in Figure 6 shows that each advocacy coalition brings its own beliefs into the strategies it uses to advocate for its position in front of the governmental decision-makers. An examination of each advocacy coalition's belief system in the context of the

eviction moratorium provides a good explanation for why it was able to pass. The ACF says that policy change can come about if there is a shift in one advocacy coalition's belief system, usually due to policy-oriented learning, but that the only beliefs that are realistically more likely to change are the secondary beliefs. Policy core beliefs are unlikely to change in one legislative session (Brooks, 2018), and deep core beliefs are nearly impossible to change (Jenkins-Smith, 2018). The interviews did not show any signs that either advocacy coalition had changed any of their beliefs.

While the advocacy coalitions differed in most of their beliefs, both of them shared a deep core belief in public health. As demonstrated in the interviews, they both recognized the importance of implementing an eviction moratorium at the beginning of the pandemic in order to prevent COVID-19 from spreading further. This led them to share the belief at the beginning that no one should be evicted during a pandemic. This shared deep core belief likely allowed the two advocacy coalitions to come to enough agreement at the beginning in order to pass the eviction moratorium. Another shared belief also likely contributed to the acquisition of rental assistance money, since both advocacy coalitions believed that government intervention was acceptable in this case, although for different reasons.

A closer examination of the belief system of the socially-motivated coalition help explain why it was fragmented and therefore why the eviction moratorium was not extended. The housing justice groups like CLVU and SNOL strongly believed in their policy core beliefs: that the market, left alone, disadvantages many people, with a disproportionate impact on people of color and low-income individuals, and that the government needs to intervene to correct for it. Yet other groups in the socially-motivated coalition—CHAPA and MACDC—did not demonstrate such a sincere commitment to those policy core beliefs in interviews, which helps

explain why they stepped back once the Governor announced he would not extend the moratorium. Perhaps for them, those beliefs were more secondary as opposed to core beliefs—a good outcome of extending the moratorium, but not their primary focus.

At this point it is important to consider the role of scientific and technical information in influencing advocacy coalition belief systems. The ACF says that actors use new scientific or technical information strategically to help advance their belief systems, rather than focusing on the facts of the information (Brooks, 2018; Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). In this case study, the socially-motivated advocacy coalition incorporated new, scientific information about COVID-19 into their arguments to push for the moratorium. However, they did not take advantage of this new information simply to push for an existing agenda; instead, they formed a new policy proposal in order to respond to the new scientific information because they took it seriously. Certain members of the market-motivated advocacy coalition questioned whether it was necessary to respond in such a way to the new threat of COVID-19; those who filed the lawsuits against the moratorium felt that there was not sufficient evidence that a moratorium would prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, for the most part, the market-motivated advocacy coalition took the new scientific information about COVID-19 seriously.

### **Social Construction of Target Populations**

An application of the social construction of target populations (SCTP) framework to this case study helps explain the ultimate policy outcome. As noted in the literature review, this framework says that policy for dependent groups—those that are low in power but viewed positively—is typically made to benefit them but still requires them to go through a complex eligibility process to obtain those benefits (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). Figure 5 showed that the public perception of those at risk for eviction shifted to the dependent category during the



pandemic. Indeed, the statewide eviction moratorium, a policy that did not require tenants to do anything to receive the benefit of the moratorium, lasted only six months, and was instead replaced with the EDI, a policy that required tenants to fill out a rental assistance application, which interviews revealed could be difficult and slow. Alternative policies could have avoided these hoops, such as providing a universal basic income that tenants did not have to apply for, or requiring landlords to be the ones to apply for rental assistance. Therefore, the SCTP helps explain why the moratorium only lasted six months and was replaced with a weaker policy that required action taken by tenants.

### **Research Limitations**

Some characteristics of the interviews I conducted present limitations to my research. First, the group of people I interviewed is not representative of all actors involved in the passage of and expiration of the moratorium. One notable omission on my interviewee list is the Governor's office. Though I reached out to the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, I was unable to connect with anyone who had been involved in the decisions around the eviction moratorium. Additionally, the interviews were conducted in May and June of 2021, more than six months after the eviction moratorium expired. Many responses were colored by interviewees' knowledge of the rollout of the EDI, the policy that came after the expiration of the statewide moratorium.

There were also some limitations in my research due to the frameworks I selected: the ACF and SCTP. First, the ACF considers the timeframe of short-term policy change to be under ten years, but the policy change discussed in this thesis took place within months, so the ACF may not be able to explain the suddenness of this change. Also, neither the ACF nor the SCTP frameworks provide an obvious place to study the role of housing market prices and demand in

the policy shift, so I did not include that in my study. Finally, even though the ACF studies policy change through the lens of belief systems, I did not ask interviewees outright about their belief systems. My original interview guide contained questions about this, but I decided to cut some of those questions in order to allocate more time to talk with interviewees about the advocacy process. Instead, I mostly gleaned belief systems from interviewees' answers to other questions.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

Massachusetts' unprecedented statewide eviction moratorium was able to pass so quickly in April 2020 for five main reasons. While the pandemic may have been a trigger for the policy change, there were other reasons that the policy change succeeded. First, the two advocacy coalitions involved in discussions around the moratorium, a socially-motivated advocacy coalition and a market-motivated advocacy coalition, shared a deep-held belief that public health is important. They also shared a belief that governmental assistance was sometimes necessary, although they differed on their reasons why and how it should be applied. These two beliefs allowed the advocacy coalitions to temporarily agree to pass the legislation, despite some costs to landlords. Second, the high unemployment rate convinced people in both advocacy coalitions that some form of government intervention was needed. Additionally, this large-scale unemployment created a shift in how society viewed those at risk for eviction, no longer seeing them as undeserving of assistance, but rather deserving of it. Fourth, some landlords were not too burdened at the beginning of the moratorium since their tenants received rental subsidies or their tenants were able to keep their jobs and work from home. Finally, some housing justice groups had already been well-connected to each other and also to certain legislators, which helped them organize and push for the eviction moratorium's passage.

The new, unprecedented policy did not last long, however, so the eviction moratorium did not constitute enduring policy change. My research uncovered six main reasons why it failed to exist beyond six months. Two external events influenced decision-makers: the enactment of a federal eviction moratorium, which covered tenants although to a lesser extent, and legal challenges against the moratorium, which questioned its constitutionality. Also, the unexpected death of Chief Justice Gants in September 2020 resulted in a loss of opportunity for groups

representing tenants to advocate for an extension. Additionally, the real estate industry in Massachusetts has good connections to and influence with the Governor, who made the final decision not to extend the moratorium. Some groups also made a political calculation not to push back too hard against existing relationships they had. Finally, according to the SCTP framework, governments tend to implement beneficial yet restrictive policies for populations who are viewed positively but have low power and few resources, which is how tenants at risk for eviction were viewed. The government in this case may have unwittingly defaulted to providing that type of assistance through EDI rather than wanting to extend the eviction moratorium, which would have covered more people automatically.

## **Recommendations**

One of my central research questions that I have not yet answered so far is: “What can we learn from the failure of the pro-moratorium coalition [later re-named “socially-motivated advocacy coalition”] to extend the moratorium to inform future housing justice advocates’ work?” Based on findings from the interviews, I have three suggestions for policy advocates who want to make policy change. First, advocates should work to understand where they and their opposition align in their belief systems. They should use that knowledge to propose a policy solution that reflects that shared belief. Case study analysis through the ACF showed that the eviction moratorium was able to pass and rental assistance was acquired because each advocacy coalition overlapped on certain beliefs. Second, policy advocates should keep lines of communication open between groups with shared interests, or even with those without. Kriesberg\* and Webster-Smith\* indicated that the frequent meetings between housing advocacy groups at the beginning of the pandemic helped its passage. Finally, legislators should be sure to include grassroots organizations before making policy decisions. The knowledge that Webster-

Smith\* had from her work with members through SNOL helped inform the policy proposal and made it stronger for tenants.

### **Further Study**

While the goal of this thesis was not to debate the merits of the eviction moratorium policy, there has been subsequent research on the impact that eviction moratoriums have had on the spread of COVID-19, which shows why it is important to continue studying this issue. For example, one working paper found that policies that limit evictions reduce COVID-19 infections by 3.8% and deaths by 11% (Jowers et al., 2021). Another study found that evictions increase risk of COVID-19 for all households, not just those experiencing eviction (Nande et al., 2021).

There are a few topics that were out of scope for this thesis but would be valuable to investigate further to understand how the Massachusetts case study fits into a larger, national context. First, there was a partisan dynamic to the eviction moratorium debate that I did not delve into. Democratic legislators introduced both the eviction moratorium bill and the Housing Stability Act. The only opposition in the legislature to the eviction moratorium in April 2020 came from a Republican, and a Republican governor decided not to extend the moratorium in October 2020. However, I did not ask interviewees about their own political affiliation or that of their organization. I also did not explore the Massachusetts-specific dynamics within each party, particularly that many of the Democrats in the legislature lean moderate or more conservative, at least compared to the commonwealth's federal representatives. This could explain why they were unwilling to extend the moratorium, even though they had a veto-proof supermajority.

Since this thesis was a case study, another opportunity for further study is to compare it to case studies of other states that implemented eviction moratoriums around the same time. It would be interesting to learn whether some of the reasons it passed and then expired in

Massachusetts are similar to why a moratorium passed or not in another state. Additionally, there is room to expand the analysis conducted in this thesis by tying it into U.S. housing policy more generally. For example, a future researcher could examine how landlords and tenants are framed in the U.S. housing policy debate to see if it matches up with this case study.

## Appendix A

### Other Policy Change Frameworks Considered

As noted in the literature review, I considered other well-established and active policy change frameworks besides the ACF and SCTP when determining which framework to use to guide this thesis. This section describes the other frameworks I considered and explains why I decided not to use them. There were a number of theories that were easy to rule out as irrelevant to my case. Other theories—policy diffusion, multiple streams framework (MSF), and punctuated equilibrium theory (PET)—required closer examination to determine that they were not a suitable fit for this thesis.

The theories that were clearly not a good fit for this project were as follows. First, since policy feedback theory considers how the existence of already-implemented policies influences future policymaking (Mettler & Sorelle, 2018), I did not include it in my study. This thesis focuses on a new policy, not one that has already been implemented. As I stated in study objectives, I did not study the outcomes of the eviction moratorium policy. Second, the narrative policy framework studies the role of narratives in the policy process (Shanahan et al., 2018), but it focuses more on the narrative and less on the policy that results from the narrative. This thesis attempts to explain policy change, and so a description of what the narratives were leading up to the change is not useful if it cannot successfully link to why the change occurred. The theory also has no place for some of the context that I wanted to explore, such as legislative actors and changing economic conditions. Third, the Institutional Analysis and Development framework focuses heavily on the role of institutions in addressing shared problems (Schlager & Cox, 2018), whereas I wanted to study more than just the role of institutions in Massachusetts' policy change. Fourth, the social-ecological systems framework's focus on ecological systems and

environmental resources (Schlager & Cox, 2018) made it unapplicable to this project. Fifth, path dependency has been applied to housing policy, but the literature lacked sufficient examples of how it works in a U.S. context. Finally, a brief search for resources on revolutionary theory only yielded literature about events with the word revolution in their title; this eviction moratorium was not the result of revolutionary action.

### **Policy Diffusion**

Policy diffusion is a promising theory for studying the recent proliferation of housing policy changes across the U.S. because it seeks to explain how policies spread from state to state or country to country. It does so by quantitatively measuring how quickly states or other jurisdictions adopt similar policies to each other, usually in a timeframe of years. Walker (1969), one of the earliest scholars on policy diffusion, developed an innovation score to measure how quickly states adopted 88 different programs; he defined an innovation as any program or policy that is new to that state, even if the policy has been adopted elsewhere. He found that larger, wealthier, and more industrialized states (like California, Massachusetts, and New York) tended to adopt new policies more quickly. He hypothesized that lawmakers adopt policy that has been already adopted by their peers because they have bounded rationality, or a limited amount of time to process information and make informed policy choices (Walker, 1969). He also theorized that regionalism plays a role in policy adoption: that states are more likely to compare themselves to others within their self-defined geographically proximate peer group (Walker, 1969). Of course, some have criticized Walker's innovation score, saying it fails to truly predict the likelihood of a jurisdiction to innovate; governments may be innovative in some areas and less so in others (Berry & Berry, 2018).



The literature on policy diffusion has identified different mechanisms through which diffusion typically occurs. Shipan and Volden (2008) found that learning, economic competition, imitation, and coercion were key reasons for policy adoption. They said that learning fosters policy adoption when governments learn that policies enacted in other states or cities were effective, whether in terms of program output or in helping to win a reelection (Berry & Berry, 2018). They also suggested that governments can be motivated to adopt policy when they consider the economic impact the adoption or non-adoption of that policy might have on their own jurisdiction. They said that policy diffusion can also happen through imitation, which is when a government simply copies the policy of another jurisdiction because they see that jurisdiction as a peer, role model, or worthy of being imitated for other reasons like partisan ideology. They listed the fourth mechanism as coercion, which occurs when a more powerful jurisdiction takes action that either incentivizes or forces another to adopt a policy; they say that in the U.S., this mostly occurs as top-down coercion from the federal or a state government. Other scholars have identified another mechanism: normative pressure, which happens when governments adopt the legislation of other governments because they want to conform to shared norms (Berry & Berry, 2018). Policy diffusion can occur as a result of one or more of these mechanisms at the same time (Berry & Berry, 2018).

Since Walker's 1969 publication, policy diffusion in practice has been used to study the diffusion of policies that were implemented over the course of years or even decades. Shipan and Volden (2008), for example, looked at the passage of antismoking laws in the U.S. over the course of 25 years, from 1975 to 2000. Karch (2007) studied the diffusion of five different policies in the health care and welfare policy over the course of years, the shortest range of which was four years. Mooney and Lee (1995) looked at the diffusion of state abortion

regulations from 1966 to 1972. While policy diffusion certainly has precedent in the literature for studies at the state level, its heavily quantitative methods are not suitable for a case study.

Additionally, the quick succession of states adopting eviction moratoriums in March, April, and May of 2020 does not fit with the years-long time frame of so many of these studies; from a long-term perspective, the adoption of these eviction moratoriums all happened at once.

### **Multiple Streams Framework**

One popular theory potentially relevant to the topic of this thesis is John Kingdon's multiple streams framework (MSF), which has been cited over 12,000 times (Cairney & Jones, 2016). It is a mainstream approach to thinking about policy change; in fact, it was an assigned reading in Tufts' *Foundations of Public Policy* course in 2019. Developed in the 1980's, Kingdon's work focuses on how policy ideas rise to get on an agenda. It is composed of five elements: three streams (problem, policy, and politics), a policy window, and policy entrepreneurs (Kingdon, 1995). Kingdon argued that these three streams are independent processes from one another but that they all affect agenda setting.

The problem stream deals with the issue at hand. A problem is defined as a condition that is not in an ideal state and that requires government action to solve (Herweg et al., 2018). However, the literature has made it clear that problems are subjective. For example, some conditions may not be seen as requiring government action until exposed or compared with something else. Kingdon (1995) argues that something only becomes a problem when people decide that something about an existing condition needs to change. This could be because the problem got quantitatively worse, because of negative feedback, or because an event draws additional attention to the issue (these are known as focusing events). In this case study, the pandemic could be framed as a focusing event that drew attention to the problem of evictions.

Therefore, a potential avenue of research using the MSF theory would be to explore whether or how the pandemic exposed the problem of eviction and whether people's perceptions changed about whether evictions required government action.

Kingdon (1995) described the policy stream as a community of different actors, such as congresspeople, civil servants, lobbyists, academics, and journalists, who constantly debate and iterate on policy ideas in a "primeval soup" in order to form fully developed policy ideas. He suggested that many people in this community have pet issues for which they work to create policy solutions. Ideas are more likely to survive in this community if they are technically feasible, have financial viability, demonstrate accepted values, and have public acquiescence (Herweg et al., 2018). Once an idea emerges from the primeval soup that meets these criteria, Herweg et al. (2018) argue that it is ready to be coupled with one of the other streams.

The third stream is the politics stream, which includes three core elements: political campaigns, interest groups, and Kingdon's concept of the national mood. Political campaigns are important in this stream because some political parties or elected officials may be more open to a policy idea than others. Interest groups also have a say; the more powerful an interest group is, the less likely a policy idea will get on the agenda if the group is opposed to it (Herweg et al., 2018). Finally, the national mood is the policymakers' perceptions of the national mood, a Kingdon concept which assumes that the majority of a country thinks the same way and that occasionally this mood shifts. Scholars of MSF have estimated the national mood in more recent years using opinion poll results, which policymakers rely on (Herweg et al., 2018). The political campaigns, interest groups, and national mood do not all need to reflect support for a policy idea in order for it to rise on the agenda; in fact, some argue that a government that supports a

particular policy may be able to advance it even in the absence of national or interest-group support (Herweg et al., 2018).

Outside of the three streams, the other two key elements of Kingdon's MSF theory are the policy window and the policy entrepreneur. The policy window occurs when an opportunity opens up for advocates to push pet policies or problems in front of policymakers (Herweg et al., 2018). These advocates with pet policy issues are called policy entrepreneurs. Since the problem, policy, and politics streams are seen as independent under Kingdon's approach, these policy entrepreneurs are needed to tie them together by bringing policies that fit a problem to the politicians (Herweg et al., 2018). The policy windows may happen in the problem stream, such as when a new problem arises, or something becomes seen as a problem, or when an existing problem gets objectively worse (like a rising unemployment rate) (Kingdon, 1995). It could also happen on the politics side with a change in administration or in the national mood (Kingdon, 1995). Herweg et al. (2018) say that policy windows that open in the problem stream, like the one in this case study, are more likely to require a rapid response than those that originate in the politics stream. Kingdon (1995) hypothesizes that if the three streams converge in a policy window, the topic is more likely to get on the agenda.

MSF has been applied to the study of housing policy. Colburn (2014) utilized the MSF in addition to the social construction of target populations to study why federal homelessness policy switched after the Great Recession to focus more on homelessness prevention, when previously it had prioritized those who were already homeless. To do so, he considered what was happening in each of Kingdon's three streams during the Great Recession. In the politics stream, he considered how the political composition of the Presidency and the Senate affected the policy response. In the policy stream, he explained that the federal government had previously shied

away from spending on homelessness prevention because it had been seen as inefficient; but, due to the expected rapid rise in homelessness in the problem stream, they were willing to consider something less efficient in order to address it quickly.

Kingdon developed the MSF to study cases in the U.S. related to health, transport, and fiscal policy, yet it has since then been applied to a number of other countries and policy areas (Herweg et al., 2018). The MSF is potentially a good fit for this project because it has been studied primarily through case studies, in which researchers use documentary and interview analysis and present their findings such that they can be compared to other studies (Cairney & Jones, 2016). It is also easy to understand, easy to plug the context of the Massachusetts eviction moratorium into the three streams, and the pandemic is quite clearly reflected in the focusing event and policy window. If I used it, I would have a way to consider the policy discussions around protections for renters that were taking place before the pandemic. However, the MSF fails to capture the power dynamics and tensions between two key groups in my case, landlords and tenants, in any of its elements.

I ultimately decided not to use MSF for this case because of some of the holes that researchers have uncovered in Kingdon's approach and how it has been applied. For example, Zahariadis (2016) argues that it overlooks the role of institutions in policy change. Additionally, while Cairney and Jones (2016) applaud how easy to understand MSF is, they caution that scholars should make sure to use MSF thoughtfully if they wish to use it in their work. They were disappointed to find that most articles citing Kingdon only cited it "superficially" and were unable to explain how their case fit into the wider context or the strengths and limitations of the MSF analysis. Heikkila and Cairney (2018) also found that scholars describe the interaction between the elements of MSF in different ways, which hinders comparisons and could be a

drawback to using this method. This could be because MSF is known for being too vague and for encouraging narrative storytelling rather than the gathering of empirical evidence (Herweg et al., 2018). Finally, MSF was developed to explain how policy ideas get on an agenda, not how policy is decided upon or implemented (Herweg et al., 2018), which is what I want to study. Nevertheless, it been applied to cases of policy decision-making and scholars like Herweg et al. (2018) have offered some adaptations to successfully incorporate the study of decision-making.

### **Punctuated Equilibrium Theory**

Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET) attempts to explain why policy areas are characterized by both stability and occasional, abrupt changes (Baumgartner et al., 2018). The Massachusetts eviction moratorium could certainly be characterized as an abrupt shift in policy resulting from the unexpected pandemic and ensuing unemployment. PET is similar to MSF in that it also focuses on how issues gain attention and rise on agendas. Like MSF, it was developed for a U.S. context but scholars have since expanded its application to other political systems and countries, as well as to states (Baumgartner et al., 2018). However, unlike MSF, it considers the role of institutions. Jones and Baumgartner (2012) recognize that institutions in the U.S. were intentionally built to make change difficult. They were dissatisfied with previous literature that had depicted the policy realm in a gridlock, where things are stable and hardly ever change. Instead, they argue that the world of policy is characterized by long periods of stability “punctuated” by abrupt shifts in policy. Like policy diffusion, PET assumes that decision makers have “bounded rationality,” which means that they do not just consider the costs and benefits of something, but that they are also influenced by their emotions and by their limited attention spans and time (Jones and Baumgartner, 2012). Jones and Baumgartner (2012) argue that change occurs policy-by-policy and not solely through elections, which they say is the standard theory

for policy change in the U.S. PET theorizes that because governments like the one in the U.S. are set up to maintain an equilibrium through the separation of powers, that when change does happen, it is big (Baumgartner et al., 2018). They say mobilization is needed to break this naturally occurring gridlock that is a result of the institutions (Baumgartner et al., 2018).

A core element of PET is the “policy subsystems,” which are communities of specialized actors working out of the spotlight on their specific policy area (Baumgartner et al., 2018). This allows the political system to process different policy topics simultaneously, unlike humans, who have to process things one at a time (Baumgartner et al., 2018). However, the theory says that macropolitical institutions like the Presidency and Congress can only process things one at a time. Therefore, the theory posits that stasis occurs when the policy subsystems have control of an issue, and change happens when the issue moves to the agenda of the macropolitical institutions (Baumgartner et al., 2018). It says that change can occur as a result of the build-up of a number of minor changes (like an earthquake), or as a reaction to an abrupt event (like a pandemic) (Baumgartner et al., 2018). It also considers the concept of a positive feedback process, which is defined as when a change to an issue area causes large future changes (Baumgartner et al., 2018). PET is essentially a theory of how organizations process and react to incoming information (Baumgartner et al., 2018).

One critique of PET is that in its focus on institutions, it fails to satisfactorily incorporate social movements (Baumgartner et al., 2018). Since I wanted to incorporate social movements and activist networks into my analysis, I decided it would not be a good fit for this case. Additionally, I found PET to include too many elements without a clear depiction of how they link to each other. Many of the applications used quantitative methods to predict when a punctuation would occur, which is not useful for this case study. The applications were also

working on a longer-term timeline since they considered the status period in addition to the punctuations. Two examples from literature look at timeframes of more than a decade (Dziengel, 2010; Sharp, 2019). I studied a shorter timeframe around the pandemic. Though it would be possible to use PET to explain the relative lack of aggressive housing policy to protect renters before the pandemic and the subsequent provision of it during the pandemic, in too many other ways it is a poor fit.



## Appendix B

### Recruitment Email

Below is the recruitment approved by the Tufts IRB. I had permission from the IRB to tailor it to the person I was emailing. I ended up changing some of the wording too after realizing that not everyone was strictly for or against the moratorium.

Dear [insert name],

I am a student at Tufts University working towards a Masters in Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning. I am writing a thesis in which I seek to understand how policy change happens by studying the implementation, extension, and expiration of the eviction moratorium in Massachusetts last year. I am therefore interviewing people who were involved in advocating for or against the moratorium. Given your role at [insert organization] working on [insert what they work on (e.g. advocating for tenants' rights, providing resources to landlords)], I am interested in speaking with you to learn more about the processes of how the moratorium got passed and how it ended. I am particularly interested in hearing your thoughts on [insert phrase based on their role (e.g. the role of non-profits in getting it passed, what the roadblocks were in getting it extended)]. Would you be willing to meet virtually for about one hour for an interview so I can ask you more about this?

Thank you for considering.

Sincerely,

Katy Wassam  
Candidate for M.A. in Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning  
Tufts University

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent Script

The informed consent script below was IRB-approved. I read it out loud at the beginning of each interview.

#### **Research Participant Informed Consent Script**

Hello, I am a student researcher from Tufts University. I am conducting a research study that aims to understand the policy process behind the passage of and expiration of the eviction moratorium in MA. As I mentioned in my email, I would like to ask you some questions in this interview for my research. This interview will last about an hour. I may also reach out after the interview for follow-up questions. It's your decision to participate today, and there are no consequences to saying no. I don't anticipate any major risks to your participation. If at any time during our talk you don't want to answer a question, let me know, and we can skip it. If at any time you want to stop participating, or you don't want to start at all, please tell me. With your permission, I would like to record our conversation today so that I can capture your words accurately. If you want to answer a question but do not want it recorded, please let me know and I will stop recording. The content of our conversation may be used in a thesis at Tufts, which will be published on an online scholarly database (ProQuest), which means anyone with access to ProQuest will be able to view it. The content may also be used in future publications or presentations. I plan to include your name and organization in these outputs. However, if you would prefer to remain anonymous, please let me know, in which case I will not share identifiable information about you beyond myself and people helping me with this study whom I trust to maintain your confidentiality. In either case, I will email you my own contact information and the contact information of the research oversight board at Tufts, the Tufts SBER IRB, if you need to get in touch about this research at any point in the future. Now I would like to ask you if you agree to participate in this study, and to talk to me about the eviction moratorium in MA. I will write down your answers.

- Do you agree to participate? [If the participant answers no, I will end the Zoom call]
- Do you agree to let me to record our conversation? [If no, I will continue the interview and simply take notes]
- Do you agree to be quoted directly? [If no, I will continue the interview but not use direct quotes from them in my thesis]
- Do you agree to have your name and organization used in study output? [If no, I will keep them as anonymous in my thesis]
- Do you agree to allow the findings from this interview to be used in future studies? [If no, I will proceed with the interview but only use the findings for my thesis, nothing else]

## Appendix D

### Interview Guide

Below is the interview guide that was approved by the IRB. Since I was conducting semi-structured interviews, I tailored the questions to each person and did not ask all questions of everyone.

#### Questions to understand belief systems:

- Did you consider evictions to be a crisis before the pandemic? Why did you see it as a crisis or not?
- Do you consider evictions to be a crisis now? Why? If your response changed from the previous question, explain why you think differently now.
- In general, do you believe that renters at risk of being unable to pay their rent should receive government intervention to help them? Do you believe that landlords with tenants at risk of being unable to pay their rent should receive government intervention to help them? (Alternate phrasing: that there should be public policy to support them). Would you say that's how you've always felt, or did the pandemic change your views on this in any way?
- How might have the media or other organizations influenced your position?
- How did the role of the pandemic as a public health crisis (as opposed to an economic crisis) influence your policy response to evictions, if at all?
- If you are opposed to an eviction moratorium, is there another policy you support/would support to address the issue that many renters in MA are currently unable to afford their rent? Why do you think that would be a successful policy?

#### Questions to understand if there were any long-term changes to the coalitions:

- Were you conducting advocacy around evictions before the pandemic? If so, what actions did you take?
- Did you notice any changes to the general policy on evictions in MA prior to the pandemic? If so, what were those?

#### Questions to understand motivations:

- Why did/do you advocate for/against an eviction moratorium as a response to the pandemic?
- What motivated you to support/not support the eviction moratorium?
- [For politicians or organizations]: Would there have been political consequences (e.g. from constituents, donors) to you supporting/not supporting the moratorium? What would those have been? Were there political benefits to supporting/not supporting the moratorium? What were those?

#### Questions to understand makeup of coalitions:

- Are there other groups that hold the same view as you on the eviction moratorium? Have you worked with anyone else on advocating pro-/anti-moratorium?

- Do you feel your views were reflected in the way the media (e.g. the Boston Globe) portrayed the eviction moratorium?

Questions to understand strategies and success:

- Who did you work with to advocate for/against the eviction moratorium and bring it to the decision-makers' attention? How did you go about this advocacy work? Would you say you were successful at it? If so, why? If not, why not? What were some of the barriers you faced in getting it in front of the legislature or Governor?
- Why do you think the current administration saw the eviction moratorium as an acceptable intervention in April 2020? Why do you think they took another approach in the fall?
- What are some of the factors that you think prevented the eviction moratorium from being extended in October of 2020?

General questions:

- Is there anyone amongst your contacts that you recommend I speak with to understand this topic further?
- May I reach out to you again if I have follow-up questions after this interview?

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