Excerpt from May 24, 2016 Senate formal session
on the FY17 Budget on Housing Court expansion
as reported by State House News

Sen. Tarr said, Turning to constrained resources, it would seem there's very little room for programmatic expansion, and yet we have a major expansion of the housing court. How can we afford that? There's concurrent jurisdiction between district courts and housing courts. Is this something that this year has an impact that grows overtime? As we think about resiliency, does housing court fit?

Sen. Spilka said, I welcome the question. By investing now we'll create more resilient residents. The governor included this. We had this in our budget last year. We believe this investment is well worth it. There are many areas of the commonwealth that have the benefit of a housing court. We provide access to Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket, Suffolk County communities, and the Middlesex and Norfolk communities without a housing court. The housing court has the lowest cost per case across the Trial Court, so expansive cases in district court would now be tried at less cost in a housing court. The housing court has a tenancy preservation program. You want to talk about resiliency, this is something we can do. This helps people with mental illness retain their housing, and in 2016 alone prevented homelessness in 498 cases out of 537 cases. Each successful case is a family that avoided the state-funded emergency shelter program. So while expanding housing court isn't without a cost and it could grow to between $2 and $3 million, we believe it will save money.

**Sen. Tarr said, I am delighted that the committee shares a priority with the gentleman in the corner office**