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MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

May 27, 2014

Looking Ahead to Fiscal Year 2015: The Senate Has Concluded Its Budget Debate, and the Conference Committee Deliberations Will Begin Soon

**Please Thank Your State Senator for Supporting Key Amendments on Housing,
Homelessness, and Safety Net Programs!**

Quick Links

[Coalition's home page](#)

[Outcomes for key Senate budget amendments](#)

[Coalition's Senate amendment overview](#)

[Coalition's SWM budget analysis and amendment advocacy information](#)

[EA amendment fact sheet on families at imminent risk of staying in places not meant for human habitation](#)

[Seven Day Temporary Emergency Accommodations amendment fact sheet](#)

[TAFDC grant increase fact sheet](#)

[Senate Ways and Means budget proposal](#)

[House of Representatives](#)

Greetings!

Thank you for all of your advocacy and outreach to improve the Senate version of the FY'15 budget! Last Thursday night, the State Senate concluded its debate on their [fiscal year 2015 budget recommendations](#) for the Commonwealth.

During the Senate budget debate last week, very few amendments were adopted overall. **Please see below and [here](#) for more details on the outcomes for key housing, homelessness, and safety net program amendments.**

While the results largely were disappointing, the budget is not finalized yet! Please stay tuned for next steps and needed advocacy for the Conference Committee stage of the budget process— where the House and Senate iron out the differences between their respective versions of the budget. In the meantime, please thank your Senator for her/his sponsorship and/or co-sponsorship of the amendments below ([also listed here](#)).

Thank you for advocating with us to protect and promote investment in these programs!

Outcomes for Key Senate Amendments Related to Housing, Shelter, Homelessness Prevention, and Cash Assistance Programs

**** To see the Coalition's list of outcomes for key Senate budget amendments, please [click here](#). ****

To see the Coalition's SWM budget analysis from May 15th, [please click here](#).

[FY'15 budget proposal](#)

[Governor's FY'15 budget proposal](#)

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[Overview of budget process](#)

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To access SWM's complete budget recommendations, please go to [SWM FY'15 budget recommendations](#).

Key Amendments Overview

1. Unaccompanied youth homelessness (proposed outside section and EOHHS administrative line item, 4000-0300):

- [Amendment #737](#), on increasing funding for the work of the Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, from \$150,000 to \$500,000. The funds would be used to continue to survey of unaccompanied youth across Massachusetts and conduct youth outreach; 2.) Fund 3-6 demonstration projects to identify service and housing models appropriate to support unaccompanied youth in their education and successful transition from childhood to adulthood; and 3.) Fund a part-time staff person or consultant to oversee implementation, to analyze data, and to report to the Massachusetts Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Commission. (Lead sponsor: Senator Chandler)
 - **Outcome: Not included in the final Senate budget.**
- [Amendment #834](#), on creating a continuum of housing and services for unaccompanied youth and young adults age 24 and younger who are experiencing homelessness out on their own, without a parent or guardian. This amendment seeks to incorporate the full language from House Bill 135, An Act providing housing and support services to unaccompanied homeless youth into the FY'15 budget (Lead sponsor: Senator Lewis)
 - **Outcome: Not included in the final Senate budget.**

2. Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter and services (EA, line item 7004-0101):

- [Amendment #371](#), to ensure that families experiencing homelessness do not have to stay in places not meant for human habitation before being able to access shelter (Lead sponsor: Senator Donnelly)
 - **Outcome: Not included in the final Senate budget.**
- [Amendment #370](#), to restore long-standing language that allows families who only are placed in shelter temporarily pending verification who then ultimately are found ineligible for ongoing shelter to re-access shelter within 12 months if they meet the other eligibility criteria (Lead sponsor: Senator Donnelly)
 - **Outcome: Adopted; this amendment was included in the final Senate budget!**
- [Amendment #412](#), to increase EA funding by \$20 million in FY'15, up to \$156.9 million (Lead sponsor: Senator Lovely)
 - **Outcome: Not included in the final Senate budget.**
- [Amendment #354](#), to ensure that greater fairness in the noncompliance system that can lead to the termination of families' shelter and motel benefits, and to ensure that good cause is taken into consideration by the Department of Housing and Community Development when sanctioning families (Lead sponsor: Senator Spilka)
 - **Outcome: Not included in the final Senate budget.**

3. Seven Day Temporary Emergency Accommodations (SDTEA, via line item 7004-9316):

- [Amendment #375](#), to reinstate the SDTEA program under the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program to provide a safety net of up to 7 days of shelter for families not yet eligible for EA shelter who are heading to stay in places not meant for human habitation and to fund SDTEA at \$2 million (Lead sponsor: Senator Donnelly)
 - **Outcome: Not included in the final Senate budget.**

4. HomeBASE Housing Assistance Program (line item 7004-0108):

- [Amendment #399](#), to ensure that the statewide limit is no less than \$6,000 and allowing certain families to re-access needed funds after 12 months of ending HomeBASE instead of making families wait for 24 months (Lead sponsor: Senator O'Connor-Ives)
 - **Outcome: Not included in the final Senate budget.**

5. Online Application and Centralized Waiting List for State-Funded Subsidized Housing (within line item 7002-0017):

- [Amendment #381](#), to provide \$2 million for the creation of an online application and centralized waiting list for state-funded subsidized housing resources (Lead sponsor: Senator Chang-Díaz)
 - **Outcome: While Amendment #381 was rejected, language and funding to create an online application and waiting list for mobile subsidies under the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program was included in the final Senate budget, via Senator Eldridge's Amendment #446. That amendment also provides increased guidance to DHCD in how to distribute new MRVP subsidies in FY'15.**

6. Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (line item 4403-2000):

- [Amendment #895](#), to increase monthly cash benefits to TAFDC program participants by an estimated \$70/month (Lead sponsor: Senator Wolf)
 - **Outcome: Not included in the final Senate budget.**

7. McKinney-Vento school transportation for students experiencing homelessness (line item 7035-0005):

- [Amendment #567](#), to increase McKinney-Vento funds to \$14.9 million so as to reimburse cities and towns for the costs incurred when transporting children experiencing homelessness back to their schools of origin (Lead sponsor: Senator Eldridge)
 - **Outcome: Not included in the final Senate budget.**

8. Home and Healthy for Good (line item 7004-0104):

- [Amendment #719](#), to provide \$200,000 to continue the LGBTQ young adult housing initiative through the Home and Healthy for Good Program (Lead sponsor: Senator Keenan)

- **Outcome: Not included in the final Senate budget.**

Also of note:

- The Senate rejected [Amendment #436](#), which would have increased funding for shelter, services, and housing for individuals experiencing homelessness up to \$48.5 million (Lead sponsor: Senator McGee).
- The Senate approved [Amendment #441](#), which added \$200,000 more for the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP) for individuals with disabilities (Lead sponsor: Senator Eldridge).
- The Senate did not approve [Amendment #445](#) to provide \$2 million for resident services within state-funded public housing (Lead sponsor: Senator Eldridge).
- The Senate approved a redraft of [Amendment #722](#) to provide \$200,000 in additional funds for Teen Living Programs (Lead sponsor: Senator Finegold).
- **To track additional amendments, please go to <https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2015/Senate/ChamberActions>.**

Take Action Today!

Please click on the links above to see if your State Senator sponsored or co-sponsored the amendments listed. If so, please thank her or him for their active support for families, individuals, and youth experiencing homelessness and/or living in poverty.

State Senators can be reached through the State House switchboard: 617-722-2000, or directly through the numbers listed here: [Directory of Senators](#).

To search for your Senator based on your address, please [click here](#).

We hope you will join us as the Coalition continues to push for the protection of housing and homelessness programs for FY'15. We will keep you informed of the progress as the state's budget makes it way through the next stages in the weeks ahead.

For more information, please contact Kelly Turley at kelly@mahomeless.org or 781-595-7570 x17.



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