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MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

March 13, 2015

Take Action! Please Help Ensure Adequate Funding for Family Homelessness Programs in the Pending Supplemental Budget

Quick Links

[Coalition's home page](#)

[House version of supplemental budget](#)

[Governor's version of supplemental budget](#)

[Legislative visit response form](#) from Legislative Action Day

[Coalition's FY'16 budget priorities](#)

[Coalition's 2015-2016 bill priorities](#)

[Budget and bill campaign fact sheets](#)

[Link to Governor Baker's FY'16 budget proposal](#)

Recent media coverage:

[WGBH](#) "Baker's homelessness plan is much the same as Patrick's - but it just might work"

[State House News](#) "Young lobbyists in push to fund homelessness law they helped pass"

Greetings!

This week, the House took up the Governor's \$350 million FY'15 supplemental request. Among many items needing mid-year increases are the **Emergency Assistance** family shelter and services program (EA line item 7004-0101) and the **HomeBASE** homelessness diversion and re-housing program for families (line item 7004-0108). We are grateful that the Governor (via [House Bill 60](#)) and the House (via [House Bill 65](#)) each included \$44.2 million in much-needed funding for EA in their versions of the budget, but if the final supplemental budget includes that amount, the account still will be underfunded by \$8 million. Similarly, the HomeBASE program will need an additional \$4.0 million to \$4.5 million to be able to continue to provide diversion and re-housing resources to eligible families through the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2015). The Governor proposed adding \$300,000 in the supplemental budget for HomeBASE, and the House did not include any funds.

The Senate will take up the supplemental budget soon, as early as next week. **Please reach out to your State Senator to ask her/him to support supplemental appropriations of \$52.2 million for Emergency Assistance and \$4.5 million for HomeBASE in the pending supplemental budget.** See below for a sample script.

State House switchboard: 617-722-2000. Find out who your Senator is here: www.wheredoivotema.com or here: <https://malegislature.gov/People/Senate>

In the first half of this fiscal year, the 3,319 families with children entered the Emergency Assistance and HomeBASE programs. Please help us ensure that the doors to EA and HomeBASE remain open for families and children confronting homelessness!

Thank you for your advocacy and partnership!

-Kelly

[State House News](#) "Mix of optimism, concern in Baker budget for the homeless"

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Great News! We Won the IKEA Challenge!

Thank you for all of your votes in the IKEA Challenge! We found out this week that we will be receiving 60 brand new beds and bedding from the IKEA store in Stoughton. The beds and bedding will be distributed through the Coalition's [A Bed for Every Child Initiative](#).

Thank you for making this possible! We are humbled and grateful for your support.

Follow A Bed for Every Child on [Facebook!](#)

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Sample Script for Calling Your Senators in Support of Increased Supplemental Appropriations

Hello, my name is _____. I live at (street address) in (city/town). I am calling in solidarity with the Massachusetts Coalition to the Homeless to ask (name of legislator) to express (her/his) strong support for additional funding for key family homelessness programs in the current FY'15 supplemental budget.

I am requesting that the Senator advocate for \$52 million in additional funds for the Emergency Assistance family shelter program (line item 7004-0101) and \$4.5 million for the HomeBASE homelessness diversion and re-housing program (line item 7004-0108).

As a constituent, I want (her/him) to know that this funding is critical to keeping a roof over families' heads and to provide families with alternatives to shelter. Could you please follow-up with me to let me know what actions the legislator plans to take? Thank you for your time!

Governor Baker's FY'16 Budget Proposals

Last Wednesday, Governor Charlie Baker released his proposed fiscal year 2016 budget, known as the "House 1 budget". His recommendations now will be examined by the Legislature, as they develop their own budget proposals on the path to finalizing the budget for the state fiscal year that will begin on July 1st.

To see his complete recommendations, please go to <http://www.mass.gov/bb/h1/fy16h1/>

Here are some highlights:

- **Housing and services for unaccompanied youth (DHCD line item 7004-xxxx and EOHHS line item 4000-0300):** The Governor's budget did not include explicit funding for housing and services for unaccompanied youth. We will continue to advocate for \$4 million in the FY'16 budget. Help us by [signing this online action](#) to your legislators today. Click here to see our [fact sheet](#).
- **Emergency Assistance family shelter and services program (EA, line item 7004-0101):** The Governor recommended funding the EA program at \$154.9 million. This level is far below the anticipated FY'15 spending level of over \$190 million. He also proposed eliminating two major sub-categories of EA eligibility: 1.) Families experiencing homelessness who have "irregular housing" and need to engage in chronic couch surfing. As an example, this would include families without permanent housing who move five times in one

week; 2.) Families experiencing homelessness who are staying temporarily in a unit unfit for human habitation. For the first half of fiscal year 2015, such families accounted for over 30% of the new entries into shelter. We are very concerned, and strongly urge the Legislature to reject this proposal. The Governor's budget also eliminates language that would require the Administration to give the Legislature 60 days advanced notice before implementing restrictions or benefits reductions, as well as language protecting families from unreasonable verification requirements. Click here to see the Coalition and Massachusetts Law Reform Institute's [fact sheet](#).

- **End Family Homelessness Reserve Fund (new line item 1599-0017):** In addition to the Governor's proposals on EA, he also recommended setting aside \$20 million in an account under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services for homelessness prevention resources for families. It is unclear how families who would be newly ineligible for shelter under the Governor's proposal would access such funds. See the [Governor's press release](#) on the initiative here. While many of the details of the proposed program remain to be fleshed out, the line item describes the program in this way:

"For a homelessness prevention reserve at the executive office of health and human services; provided, that funds shall be used to provide tailored and flexible short-term assistance to families that are homeless with a goal of rapid housing stabilization; provided further, that the funds may be used for prevention, diversion, or stabilization; provided further, that the secretary of health and human services may, with the approval of the secretary of administration and finance, transfer from this item amounts necessary to meet any costs associated with the purposes of this item; and provided further, that the department may enter into interagency service agreements as needed."

- **HomeBASE (line item 7004-0108):** The Governor recommended funding the HomeBASE program at \$26.25 million. This is just above the current FY'15 HomeBASE funding of \$26 million, but at least \$4 million less than the amount DHCD will need to continue the program until the end of this fiscal year.
- **Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP, line item 7004-9024):** The Governor recommended funding MRVP at \$75.4 million. This matches the updated estimate from DHCD for level funding existing subsidies. The Coalition and other advocacy groups will continue to push for \$100 million in FY'16 to ensure that new subsidies to tenants and developers will be available to address homelessness and housing instability. Click here to see the Housing Solutions Campaign [fact sheet](#).
- **Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP, line item 7004-9030):** The Governor recommended level funding AHVP at \$3.55 million. The Coalition and other advocacy groups will continue to push for \$7 million for this critical housing subsidy

program for individuals under the age of 60 living with disabilities. Click here to see our [fact sheet](#).

- **Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT, line item 7004-9316):** The Governor recommended level funding RAFT at \$11 million. The Coalition will continue to push for an increase up to \$15 million and an expansion of the definition of family to include various household arrangements, including unaccompanied adults, couples without minor children, etc.
- **Shelter and services for unaccompanied adults (line item 7004-0102):** The Governor recommended funding the line item that supports shelters and services for unaccompanied adults at \$40.8 million. The Coalition will continue to push for at least level funding of \$42.9 million in FY'16.
- **Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children Program (EAEDC, line item 4408-1000):** The Governor recommended funding EAEDC at \$78.9 million, based on their current caseload projections. The Governor's budget also eliminates language that would require the Administration to give the Legislature advanced notice before implementing restrictions or benefits reductions. The Coalition will continue to push for adequate funding to avoid benefit reductions, and advanced notice language. Through the bill process, we will continue to work for program improvements through the EAEDC bill (newly numbered [House Bill 529](#)).
- **Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program (TAFDC, line item 4403-2000):** The Governor recommended funding TAFDC at \$229.1 million, based on their current caseload projections. The Governor's budget also eliminates language that would require the Administration to give the Legislature advanced notice before implementing restrictions or benefits reductions. The Coalition will continue to push for adequate funding to avoid benefit reductions, advanced notice language, and the fair implementation of last session's welfare reform bill.
- **Education transportation for students experiencing homelessness (line item 7035-0008):** The Governor recommended increasing funding for McKinney-Vento related school transportation by \$1 million, up to \$8.35 million. The Coalition supports this increase, and will keep pushing for full funding, estimated to be \$14.9 million.

Please stay tuned for a budget chart comparing the FY'15 and proposed FY'16 budgets and additional analysis.

For more details or to share feedback from your calls, please reach out to Kelly Turley at kelly@mahomeless.org/781-595-7570 x17.

mchalert
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless



Please join us in raising money to help end homelessness, just by searching the Internet or shopping online with GoodSearch.

GoodSearch for the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless by following this link:

<http://www.goodsearch.com/?charityid=849550>.

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