



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

July 1, 2013

Fiscal Year 2014 Is Here! The Legislature Has Approved the FY'14 State Budget

Now the budget is off to the Governor for his signature or vetoes. See below for information on the Legislature's decisions on housing, homelessness, and safety net programs!

Quick Links

[Coalition's home page](#)

[Conference Committee's FY'14 budget, House Bill 3538](#)

[June 30th FY'13 supplemental budget](#)

[State House News coverage of the budget, via the Boston Globe](#)

[Organizational sign-on letter on family homelessness issues in the FY'14 budget](#)

[Legislative sign-on letter re: unaccompanied youth homelessness funding](#)

[MassBudget's Conference Committee Budget Preview](#)

[Final Senate FY'14 budget proposal](#)

[The Coalition's SWM analysis](#)

Dear friend,

Happy New Fiscal Year!

Last night, just before the official start of the new state fiscal year, the Legislature's Joint Conference Committee released their recommendations for the FY'14 budget. Their recommendations, contained in the \$34 billion [House Bill 3538](#), were voted on this afternoon by the House and Senate and sent to the Governor for his approval or vetoes. The Governor has 10 days to make his decisions. (A temporary spending plan is in place in the interim.)

The Conference Committee budget contains many of the important investments in housing and homelessness programs that we fought for together. Please see the sections below for more details about the Conference Committee budget and the related FY'13 supplemental budget, [House Bill 3539](#).

This year's House Conference Committee members were Representatives [Brian Dempsey](#) (D-Haverhill, Chair of House Ways and Means), [Stephen Kulik](#) (D-Worthington, Vice Chair of House Ways and Means), and [Vinny deMacedo](#) (R-Plymouth, Ranking Minority Member of House Ways and Means). The Senate Conference Committee members are Senators [Stephen Brewer](#) (D-Barre, Chair of Senate Ways and Means), [Jennifer Flanagan](#) (D-Leominster, Vice Chair of Senate Ways and Mean), and [Michael Knapik](#) (R-Westfield, Ranking Minority Member of Senate Ways and Means).

Please [contact your own Legislators](#) and the Conference Committee members to thank them for their support throughout

[Senate Ways and Means
budget proposal](#)

[Final House FY'14 budget
proposal](#)

[Governor's FY'14 budget
proposal](#)

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priorities](#)

[Coalition's Present Policy
Campaigns page](#)

[Overview of budget process](#)

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the budget process for housing and homelessness program.

To learn more about the Coalition's FY'14 budget priorities, please [click here](#).

Thank you for *your* advocacy and continued support of people experiencing homelessness and housing instability!

-Kelly Turley
Director of Legislative Advocacy
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FY'14 Budget Recommendations for Housing, Shelter, Homelessness Prevention, and Cash Assistance Programs

To access the Conference Committee's complete budget recommendations, please go to [Conference Committee's FY'14 budget recommendations](#).

To access the House's complete budget recommendations, please go to [House's FY'14 budget recommendations](#).

To access the Senate's complete budget recommendations, please go to [Senate's FY'14 budget recommendations](#).

Quick Analysis of the FY'14 Budget Conference Committee Issues and Outcomes

1. Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program (RAFT, line item 7004-9316)

Our Conference Committee Request:

Adopt the Senate's line item language, with minor improvements, to create a temporary accommodations program for extremely vulnerable families within RAFT, and adopt the Senate's recommended appropriation of \$11.1 million for RAFT.

The Senate budget would require DHCD to refer extremely low-income families at imminent risk of staying in places not meant for human habitation to the RAFT providers (while ensuring that families eligible for the Emergency Assistance program still are served by EA). The Senate included an earmark of \$500,000 within the RAFT line item to provide those temporary accommodations.

The Senate budget also would require DHCD to notify the Legislature 60 days before the allotted funds are anticipated to

run out, so that the Legislature can take action. The Senate's proposed appropriation of \$11.1 million would provide much needed increased funding for this program.

We are asking the Conference Committee to adopt the Senate proposal after strengthening it to require that families at imminent risk of having to stay in a place not meant for human habitation who are referred to the RAFT program actually be placed in temporary accommodations, if needed. (See the final version of the organizational sign-on letter to the budget conferees on the RAFT proposal and in support of the Senate's recommended appropriation for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program [here](#).)

Conference Committee Outcome: Good news! The Conference Committee included the Senate's proposal, creating a new temporary accommodations program, and funded RAFT at a compromise level of \$10 million, a \$1.2 million increase over FY'13.

2. Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness Resources (via line item 4000-0300)

Our Conference Committee Request:

Adopt the House's earmark to support unaccompanied youth who are experiencing homelessness.

The House budget included language and funding to add \$150,000 to the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) administrative line item, 4000-0300. The funds would be used to 1.) pilot a survey of unaccompanied youth in 3-5 areas within Massachusetts and conduct youth outreach; 2.) fund a part-time staff person or consultant to oversee implementation, to analyze data, and to report to the Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, and, if funding permits, 3.) 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.

To see the legislative sign-on letter in support of this unaccompanied youth homelessness budget request that was circulated by Representative Jim O'Day and Senator Katherine Clark, [click here](#).

Please follow these links for the [unaccompanied youth homelessness fact sheet](#) (from the Senate campaign) and the [inaugural report of the Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth](#).

Conference Committee Outcome: Good news! The Conference Committee adopted the House's language and funding level.

3. HomeBASE Program (line item 7004-0108)

Our Conference Committee Request:

Adopt the Senate's line item language for HomeBASE. With an estimated 5,600 families set to time out of the HomeBASE rental assistance program during FY'14, the Senate budget included additional protections for families who otherwise would be facing a return to homelessness.

The final Senate budget included language to allow certain families to re-enter EA shelter, if needed, or to access a combination of HomeBASE household assistance and RAFT benefits. In addition, the final Senate budget included language to restore the homelessness preference for state-funded public housing resources and subsidies for families participating in the HomeBASE rental assistance program. (Under DHCD's current regulations, families are not eligible for this preference because their subsidies were designed to last more than 12 months.) By restoring this preference, some families may be able to transition into permanent affordable housing when their HomeBASE subsidies expire.

Click here for the [HomeBASE fact sheet](#).

Conference Committee Outcome: The Conference Committee included compromise language, based on the Senate's recommendations.

Under the committee's plan:

- The HomeBASE program will be funded at \$58.96 million.
- Families receiving HomeBASE rental assistance will be able to regain their homelessness preference for state-funded subsidized housing. DHCD will be required to promulgate new regulations to this effect no later than September 3rd.
- DHCD "shall take all necessary steps to ensure that families reaching the end of their time limited rental assistance shall not become homeless again". To do this, DHCD should help families who are timing out of HomeBASE rental assistance to access long-term subsidies (such as MRVP subsidies; see below). For those families who do become homeless and have nowhere else to go, families should be placed in Emergency Assistance shelter if they have complied with their housing stabilization plan and are income eligible for EA. In addition, families timing out of HomeBASE rental assistance will be able to access up to \$4,000 in HomeBASE household assistance and/or RAFT funds. (Families would not be able to receive more than \$4,000, though. The Senate had proposed allowing families to be able to combine RAFT and HomeBASE household assistance funds up to \$8,000.)
- DHCD will be required to submit quarterly reports to the House and Senate Ways and Means about the program, the families assisted, and families transitioning out of the

program.

4. Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP, line item 7004-9024)

Our Conference Committee Request:

Adopt the Senate's recommended funding level of \$57.5 million for MRVP, a dramatic \$15.5 million increase over the FY'13 allocation. The Senate funding level would allow the program to serve 1,000 more households with permanent housing subsidies.

Click here for the [MRVP fact sheet](#).

Conference Committee Outcome: Amazing news! The Conference Committee adopted the Senate's recommended appropriation of \$57.5 million. The language also will provide a priority for the new subsidies to certain families with disabilities who are timing out of the HomeBASE rental assistance program.

The committee also adopted language to shift income eligibility for the program from 200% of the federal poverty guidelines (currently \$39,060 for a family of 3) to 50% of area median income (AMI), which is more commonly used in housing-focused programs. AMI varies across the state. For example, 50% AMI currently is set at \$42,500 for a family of 3 in HUD's Boston-Cambridge-Quincy-New Hampshire metropolitan fair market rent area (which includes Suffolk County and parts/all of Middlesex, Essex, Norfolk, and Plymouth counties in Massachusetts) and at \$36,900 for Berkshire County and the Springfield area.

Other Important Conference Committee Requests and Outcomes

- **Emergency Assistance Family Shelter and Services Program and Motel Program (line items 7004-0101 and 7004-0103):** Adopt the House's higher combined recommended appropriation of \$106.5 million for EA shelters and motels. **Outcome:** The Conference Committee included \$90.4 million for EA shelters and services and \$6.3 million for EA motels, for a total of \$96.7 million, which is significantly lower than the FY'13 spending level. The corresponding FY'13 supplemental budget that was released last night, [House Bill 3539](#), includes an additional \$1.2 million in funding for EA motels to cover FY'13 expenditures.
- **Shelter and Services for Unaccompanied Adults At-Risk and Experiencing Homelessness (line item 7004-0102):** Adopt the House's recommended appropriation of \$40.5 million, which would be level funding with the FY'13 appropriation. **Outcome:** The Conference Committee did fund

the line item at \$40.5 million!

- **State-Funded Public Housing Authority Operating Subsidies (line item 7004-9005):** Adopt the House's recommended appropriation of \$64.4 million. **Outcome:** The Conference Committee did fund the line item at \$64.4 million!
- **McKinney-Vento Funding for the Transportation of Students Experiencing Homelessness (line item 7035-0005):** Adopt the Senate's higher recommended appropriation of \$7.35 million. **Outcome:** The Conference Committee did fund the line item at \$7.35 million!
- **Home and Healthy for Good Program (line item 7004-0104):** Adopt the House's recommended funding level of \$1.8 million and language that would create a pilot program to serve lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) unaccompanied young adults. **Outcome:** The Conference Committee funded the item at a compromise level of \$1.6 million, and included the language to create the pilot program for LGBT young adults!
- **Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children Program (EAEDC, line item 4408-1000):** Adopt the Senate's higher recommended funding level of \$93.1 million. **Outcome:** The Conference Committee included \$93.2 million for EAEDC! The language requires DTA to provide the Legislature 60 days advanced notice before making any changes in benefits or eligibility, so as to allow the Legislature to take action.
- **Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program (TAFDC, line item 4403-2000):** Adopt the House's higher recommended funding level of \$306.2 million. Adopt the House language to provide a \$40/month rental subsidy for program participants living in market-rate housing. **Outcome:** The Conference Committee adopted the Senate's lower recommended appropriation of \$302 million for TAFDC and the House's proposed \$40/month rental subsidy. The language requires DTA to provide the Legislature 75 days advanced notice before making any changes in benefits or eligibility, so as to allow the Legislature to take action.
- **Related Welfare Issues:** Reject the House's proposal to require photos on the electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards of participants in cash assistance and nutritional assistance programs. Adopt the Senate's \$40/month transportation reimbursement within the Employment Services Program (line item 4401-1000). **Outcome:** Unfortunately, the Conference Committee included an EBT photo ID requirement in the corresponding FY'13 supplemental budget, [House Bill 3539](#). The language does, however, provide exemptions for elders, people who are blind, people with disabilities, people who are victims of domestic violence. The supplemental budget also would create a new Bureau of Program Integrity within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to oversee DTA

programs. The FY'14 budget includes the Senate's earmark of \$460,966 in line item 4401-1000 for transportation benefits for TAFDC participants.

Action Steps

1.) Please thank your State Representative and State Senator (and Conference Committee members) for their work to secure key language and funding for housing, homelessness, and safety net programs.

Legislators can be reached through the State House switchboard at 617-722-2000, or you can go [here](#) to search for your elected officials based on your address.

2.) Ask Governor Deval Patrick to support the Legislature's investments in housing and homelessness programs by signing those sections of the FY'14 budget into law.

Stay tuned for more details about needed advocacy with the Governor's office to improve the welfare reform provisions recommended by the Legislature in the supplemental budget.

The Governor's office can be reached at 617-725-4005 or 888-870-7770.

Thank you for your continued advocacy!

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

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Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless



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