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MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

March 12, 2015

Gratitude and Updates: Thank You for Your Support on Legislative Action Day + Analysis of the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Key Housing and Homelessness Programs

Quick Links

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[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!

Thank you so much for your support for this year's Legislative Action Day! In spite of the snow last Thursday, 250 members and supporters from across the state gathered in the State House to further our shared work to prevent and end homelessness— to ensure that everyone in the Commonwealth has a safe, permanent, and warm place to call home all year-round.

Thank you also to everyone who called their State Representative and State Senator last week to support for the Coalition's [budget](#) and [bill priorities](#). It's not too late to call, if you haven't had a chance yet. See below for a sample script. (State House switchboard: 617-722-2000. Find out who your legislators are here: www.wheredoivotema.com.)

If you did meet or call your legislators, **please fill out this response form to let us know how your meetings/calls went:** [Legislative meeting response form](#)

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

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LEGISLATIVE ACTION DAY 2015

Raising Up Our Voices,
Taking Action Together to End Homelessness



Sample Script for Calling Your Legislators

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 key housing, homelessness, and benefits programs in the FY'16 budget, such as new housing and services for unaccompanied youth, the Emergency Assistance family shelter program, the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program, and the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (**or include other priority programs here*).

As a constituent, I want (her/him) to know that strong action is needed, as thousands of people in the Commonwealth are experiencing homelessness and housing instability. Could you please follow-up with me to let me know what actions the legislator plans to take? Thank you for your time!

Thank You to Our Legislative Action Day 2015 Speakers

Your advocacy and engagement on Legislative Action Day and throughout the year are critical for protecting and promoting investment in key housing and homelessness programs!

Thank you to all of our amazing speakers for Legislative Action Day, including:

- Becca, Richard, Olivia, Charlie, Tameka, Jamila, and Tina who talked about the importance of [housing and services for unaccompanied youth](#), the [Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children](#) program (EAEDC), [Emergency Assistance](#) (EA), the [Massachusetts Rental Voucher](#)

[Program](#) (MRVP), the [Alternative Housing Voucher Program](#) (AHVP), etc.

- State Representative Jim O'Day (West Boylston), host of Legislative Action Day and lead sponsor of [An Act Relative to Assisting Elders and People with Disabilities in the Commonwealth](#) (a.k.a. the EAEDC bill)
- State Senator Harriette Chandler (Worcester), Senate Majority Leader and member of the Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth
- Senator Jamie Eldridge (Acton), Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Financial Services and previous Chair of the Joint Committee on Housing
- State Representative William Smitty Pignatelli (Lenox), lead sponsor of [An Act Providing a Homeless Bill of Rights](#)
- State Representative Denise Provost (Somerville), lead sponsor of [An Act to End Child Homelessness \(see #3\)](#)
- Max, Esther, Zach, and Sophie from Temple Israel in Boston who were key team players in the campaign to pass the unaccompanied youth homelessness bill
- Coalition staff

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](#).

- **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.
- **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.
- **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 or visits, please reach out to Kelly Turley at kelly@mahomeless.org/781-595-7570 x17.

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Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless



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