



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

June 18, 2012

Last Call! Your Advocacy Is Needed to Help Protect Housing and Homelessness Issues in Conference Committee!

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Dear friend,

The Conference Committee on the FY'13 budget still is finalizing its recommendations. If you haven't had a chance to weigh in with your State Representative and State Senator, please do so **today** (617-722-2000) to let them know that you care about the outcomes for housing and homelessness programs in the next state budget. Please see below for more details.

Thank you!

-Kelly Turley
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Our Previous Alert from June 11th:

Though the Senate and House have both gone through the budget recommendation and debate process, we're not done yet! Make sure to check out our comprehensive analyses of the [House](#) and [Senate](#) budgets.

With the Senate's adoption of its version of the FY'13 budget on May 25th, we now **move to the next phase of the budget process: Conference Committee.**

Once the House and the Senate vote on their respective budgets, each branch appoints three members to a joint committee (the "Conference Committee") to work out and resolve all differences between the two budgets. The rules of the Legislature stipulate that one member of each chamber's committee must be a member of the minority party. **The compromise budget that comes out of Conference Committee is then brought to the House and Senate members for a final vote before being sent to the Governor.**

In order to ensure that the Conference Committee's budget has the best language and highest levels of funding possible, we need you to help urge the committee members to create a compromise budget that supports housing and homelessness issues.

Please [contact your own legislators](#) and ask them to convey their support to the conference committee for the language and funding levels detailed in the sections below.

This year's House conference committee members are Representatives [Brian S. Dempsey](#) (D-Haverhill), [Stephen Kulik](#) (D-Worthington), and [Viriato Manuel deMacedo](#) (R-Plymouth). The Senate conference committee members are Senators [Stephen M. Brewer](#) (D-Barre), [Jennifer L. Flanagan](#) (D-Leominster), and [Michael R. Knapik](#) (R-Westfield).

Thank you for your advocacy and your continued support of housing and homelessness issues!

Recommendations to the FY'13 Budget Conference Committee on Housing and Homelessness Issues

Conference Committee Recommendations for Selected Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Line Items

1.) Emergency Assistance (line item 7004-0101).

Conference Committee Request: Adopt the Senate's budget language and the House's funding level. The Senate's version of the budget better protects families and ensures that very vulnerable families, such as those experiencing homelessness after fleeing domestic violence and those staying in places not meant for human habitation (such as cars, emergency rooms, campgrounds, and unfinished basements) are able to obtain shelter. In addition, the Senate did not include an arbitrary 9-month time limit on access to shelter. However, the House proposes funding EA at \$105.5 million, which is significantly higher than the Senate's recommendation of \$96.7 million. [Click here](#) for a fact sheet.

FY12 funding level: Currently, \$137.5 million (including the latest [supplemental appropriation](#))

FY13 House 2 funding level: \$100.4 million

FY13 House funding level: \$105.5 million (combination of line items 7004-0101 and 7004-0103)

FY13 Senate funding level: \$96.7 million

FY13 MCH funding request: Level funding with FY'12 or adequate funding so as to avoid the need for eligibility changes

2.) HomeBASE program (line item 7004-0108).

Conference Committee Request: Adopt the Senate funding level and language. The Senate proposes funding HomeBASE at more than \$7 million than the House. The Senate language also better protects families who are in or seeking to enter HomeBASE.

FY12 funding level: Currently \$65.3 million (including the latest [supplemental appropriation](#))

FY13 House 2 funding level: \$83.4 million

FY13 House funding level: \$83.4 million

FY13 Senate funding level: \$90.8 million

FY13 MCH funding request: Adequate funding to continue serving current participants and to be able to offer rental assistance, household assistance, and moving assistance to new families in FY'13.

3.) Shelter and services for unaccompanied individuals at-risk of and experiencing homelessness (line item 7004-0102).

Conference Committee Request: Because both branches funded this program at the level of \$38 million, the request to the conferees is to **ensure this funding level is maintained in Conference Committee.**

FY12 funding level: \$37.7 million

FY13 House 2 funding level: \$38.9 million

FY13 House funding level: \$38.0 million

FY13 Senate funding level: \$38.0 million

FY13 MCH funding request: \$38.9 million

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

Conference Committee Request: Adopt the House's language and funding level of \$46 million for MRVP. The House's MRVP funding level of \$46 million (\$4 million more than the Senate's proposed MRVP appropriation level). The House's language would also direct over 900 newly created vouchers to families who are in EA and in desperate need of permanent, stable housing.

FY12 funding level: \$36.0 million

FY13 House 2 funding level: \$46.0 million

FY13 House funding level: \$46.0 million

FY13 Senate funding level: \$42.0 million

FY13 MCH funding request: \$46.0 million

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

Conference Committee Request: Adopt the Senate's RAFT language. We are thrilled that both the House and the Senate

realized the need to reinvest in RAFT and responded with huge increases in appropriations from FY'12. The Senate budget language is preferable, however, as it allows certain families who receive RAFT to also be eligible for up to \$2,000 in housing assistance from HomeBASE. Additionally, the Senate language would target extremely low income households.

FY'12 funding level: \$260,000

FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$8.8 million

FY'13 House funding level: \$8.8 million

FY'13 Senate funding level: \$8.8 million

FY'13 MCH funding request: \$8.8 million

6.) Public Housing Authority Operating Subsidies (line item 7004-9005).

Conference Committee Request: Adopt the House's funding level of \$64.5 million.

FY'12 funding level: \$62.5 million

FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$66.5 million

FY'13 House funding level: \$64.5 million

FY'13 Senate funding level: \$62.5 million

FY'13 MCH funding request: \$71.0 million

7.) Home and Healthy for Good Program (line item 7004-0104)

Conference Committee Request: Adopt the Senate's funding level of \$1.4 million.

FY'12 funding level: \$1.2 million

FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$2.2 million

FY'13 House funding level: \$1.2 million

FY'13 Senate funding level: \$1.4 million

FY'13 MCH funding request: \$2.2 million

Conference Committee Recommendations for Selected Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) Line Items

1.) Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children Program (EAEDC, line item 4408-1000).

Conference Committee Request: Adopt the House's version of EAEDC funding and the Senate's language. The House proposes funding EAEDC \$88.3 million, as opposed to the Senate's funding level of \$87.3 million. The Senate language is better in that it requires the Administration to give the Legislature 90 days advance notice (as opposed to the House's proposed 60 days notice) before making any changes to eligibility requirements.

FY'12 funding level: \$89 million

FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$88.3 million

FY'13 House funding level: \$88.3 million

FY'13 Senate funding level: \$87.3 million

FY'13 MCH funding request: \$89.0 million

2.) Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children grants (TAFDC, line item 4403-2000).

Conference Committee Request: Adopt the House's version of TAFDC funding and the Senate's language. The House proposes funding TAFDC at \$324.2 million. As with EAEDC, the Senate budget language requires the Administration to give the Legislature 90 days advance notice (as opposed to the House's proposed 60 days notice) before making any changes to eligibility requirements.

FY'12 funding level: \$324.2 million (with supplemental appropriation)

FY13 House 2 funding level: \$318.9 million

FY13 House funding level: \$322.8 million

FY13 Senate funding level: \$315.4 million

MCH funding request: Adequate funding to at least maintain current eligibility standards and benefit levels.

3.) Electronic Benefit Transfer issues (EBT).

Conference Committee Request: We urge the Conferees not to adopt the House version of Outside Section language (outside Section 35) pertaining to the use of public benefits and EBT cards. Likewise, we urge the Conferees not to adopt certain unworkable Senate restrictions (Outside Sections 47-50) on the purchase of specific items by program participants. We are supportive of the Senate language that calls for a study by the Inspector General (Outside Section 155).

4.) Teen Living Program account (line item 4403-2119).

Conference Committee Request: Adopt the Senate's funding level of \$8.1 million (as opposed to the House's proposed funding level of \$7.7 million).

FY '12 funding level: \$6.4 million

FY13 House 2 funding level: \$7.7 million

FY13 House funding level: \$7.7 million

FY13 Senate funding level: \$8.1 million

Other Coalition Budget Priorities

1.) Special Commission on Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness (House Outside Section 146/Senate Redrafted Amendment 584).

Conference Committee Request: Adopt the Senate's final language, as redrafted in Senate Amendment 584. We are very excited that both the House and the Senate have expressed their commitment to ending and preventing unaccompanied youth homelessness by including language for a Special Commission in their respective final versions of the budget! The Senate's language is slightly better, as it clarifies the members who will make up the Special Commission. [Click here](#) for the language and to learn more about this Special Commission.

2.) Costs associated with transporting students experiencing homelessness under the McKinney-Vento Act (House proposed Line Item 7035-0005; Senate Outside Section 124).

Conference Committee Request: Adopt the House's proposed \$11.3 million of funding under the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to reimburse districts for the transportation costs associated with the McKinney-Vento Act. The Senate did not appropriate funds for these reimbursements; instead, they called for DESE to conduct a study of the costs to districts. The Coalition supports having an additional study conducted, but we also recognize that municipalities need financial relief now. [Click here](#) for a general fact sheet on transportation costs associated with the McKinney-Vento Act.

3.) Furniture Bank Programs to Assist Families and Individuals Exiting Homelessness.

Unfortunately, the Coalition's request for \$200,000 in funding to help support a statewide network of furniture banks to assist low-income households transitioning from homelessness into housing (through Line Item 7004-0099) was not included in either the Senate or the House budgets. We have laid a foundation for next year's budget, and will continue to pursue the funding in FY'14.

Take Action!

Please contact your Legislators and ask them to convey their support of the above language and funding levels the conference committee members support the above language

and funding levels. It is crucial that we support safety net programs and protect the rights of the Commonwealth's lowest income residents!

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

Thank you for your advocacy and support!

We hope you will join us as the Coalition continues to push for the protection of housing and homelessness programs for FY'13. 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 781-595-7570 x17.

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Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless



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