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MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

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September 10, 2015

Stand Up with Families without Homes: Ask Your Legislators to Oppose Family Shelter Access Restrictions in the Supplemental Budget

Governor Baker's proposal seeks to eliminate access to Emergency Assistance family shelter for 46% of currently eligible families!

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Greetings!

After some relatively quiet days at the State House, the legislative session is back in high gear. Please take action with us in the week ahead to **encourage the Legislature to reject Governor Baker's recycled proposal to severely restrict access to family shelter**, submitted to the Legislature as Section 30 of his [request for supplemental funds to close out FY'15](#)

Please see below for more details.

Legislators can be reached via the State House switchboard (617-722-2000) or directly through the links listed [here](#).

Thank you for your continued advocacy!

With gratitude,
Kelly

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Director of Legislative Advocacy
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Stop the Governor's Latest Attempt to Restrict Families' Access to Emergency Shelter and Services

Please encourage your State Representative and Senator to reject Governor Baker's recycled proposal to severely restrict access to family shelter, submitted to the Legislature as Section 30* of his [request for supplemental funds to close out FY'15](#).

In the supplemental budget, the Governor is seeking to limit access to the Emergency Assistance family shelter and services program (EA, line item 7004-0101) by eliminating two major sub-categories of EA eligibility for FY'16: 1.) Families experiencing homelessness that have "irregular housing" and need to engage in chronic couch surfing. As an example, this would include families without permanent housing that move five times in one or two weeks; 2.) Families experiencing homelessness that are staying temporarily in a unit unfit for human habitation. **As we have learned recently, the Administration wants to define "unit" so broadly as also to include families who already are staying in cars, campgrounds, emergency rooms, and other "non-housing unit" places not meant for human habitation!**

For fiscal year 2015 (July 2014-June 2015), such families accounted for 46% of the new families entering into shelter-- or 2,323 families with children!** We know that some families might be able to access shelter under another existing eligibility category (such as experiencing homelessness due to domestic violence), the vast majority of families would be left out in the cold.

While the Legislature rejected this proposal already when the FY'16 budget was finalized in July (after it first was proposed in March by the Governor), we are very concerned by the Administration's attempt to push such harmful changes through. We strongly urge the Legislature to continue to stand firm in their rejection of this proposal.

We are pleased to report that in our many meetings with key legislators, the Governor's EA proposal does not have momentum right now-- at the same time, it is critical for us to show legislators that we are watching and that we stand with them now and will in the future when such misguided and detrimental policy changes are proposed.

While the Governor also included a request for \$5 million to increase homelessness prevention funds for families in the supplemental budget, the articulated uses of such funds under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services are vague and the fund would not serve all of the families who would be negatively impacted by the draconian EA changes proposed in Section 30. **We hope to work more closely with the Administration, Legislature, and key stakeholders to design a prevention model that works, while not sacrificing the health and safety of families that already have lost their housing.**

Please join us in speaking out against the Governor's desired EA eligibility restrictions. If you are on social media, consider spreading the word and using the hashtag #EndHomelessnessNotHidelt

** Here's the exact EA language from the supplemental budget:*

SECTION 30. Item 7004-0101 of said section 2 of said chapter 46 is hereby amended by adding the following words:- ; provided further,

that clauses (iii) and (iv) of 760 CMR 67.06(1)(f)(6)(d) shall not apply in fiscal year 2016; and provided further, that the eligibility changes described in the preceding clause shall only be applicable through June 30, 2016.

and a [link to the EA regulations](#) referenced.

***DHCD's most recent data can be found in this [report](#). See the bottom of page 1, under "H&S [Health and Safety]: Conditions in Unit", "H&S: Irregular Housing Situation", and "H&S: Not Meant for Human Habitation".*

Contact Information for Your Legislators and Key Legislators

Here are links to the phone numbers, email addresses, and Twitter pages (if applicable) for key legislators.

- Your legislators: Find their contact information [here](#)
- [Senate President Stan Rosenberg](#): [@SenStan](#)
- [Senator Karen Spilka](#): [@KarenSpilka](#)
- [Senator Sal DiDomenico](#): [@SalDiDomenico](#)
- [House Speaker Robert DeLeo](#): [@SpeakerDeLeo](#)
- [Representative Brian Dempsey](#)
- [Representative Stephen Kulik](#): [@repstevekulik](#)

Other legislators also can be reached via the State House switchboard (617-722-2000) or directly through the links listed [here](#).

If you have time, please also continue to express your disappointment to Governor Baker:

- Phone: 617-725-4005
- Twitter: [@MassGovernor](#)

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

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