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**MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS**

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

September 25, 2015

## Hot Off the Press: Update on the Campaign to Stop Eligibility Restrictions on Access to Family Shelter

Thank You for Standing Up with Families Without Homes

### Quick Links

["DeLeo scuttles Baker plan on homelessness"](#)

["Moving the goal posts on homelessness"](#)

[One-minute activism: Link to our online EA petition to legislators](#)

[Coalition's home page](#)

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

[The Governor's FY'15 supplemental budget proposal](#)

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### Greetings!

Thank you for all of your online actions, emails, calls, and visits with state legislators to **encourage the Legislature to reject Governor Baker's recycled proposal to severely restrict access to Emergency Assistance family shelter**, submitted to the Legislature as Section 30 of his [request for supplemental funds to close out FY'15](#).

We wanted to share some great news with you before you head out for the weekend. This afternoon, the Boston Globe reported that **Speaker Robert DeLeo has come out publicly against the proposal, and has confirmed it will not be included in the House version of the supplemental budget**. Read Josh Miller's story, "DeLeo scuttles Baker plan on homelessness", [here](#).

"DeLeo said in an interview Friday he had spoken with the chairman of the House budget committee [Representative Brian Dempsey], and they both agreed that 'narrowing the eligibility requirements was not a good thing' and 'would not be in the best interest of the homeless.' He said the provision will not be part of a key bill poised for a vote next week."

Please also check out Joan Vennoch's powerful Globe editorial against the proposed changes: ["Moving the goal posts on homelessness"](#)

We will keep you informed of the next stages of the campaign once the supplemental budget is officially released. In the meantime, please thank the Speaker and Chairman Dempsey. (Their contact information is below.)

Thank you for your continued advocacy!

With gratitude,  
Kelly

Kelly Turley  
Director of Legislative Advocacy  
kelly@mahomeless.org  
781-595-7570 x17

### **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 by [signing our online petition](#) and/or calling your State Representative and Senator.** 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](mailto:kelly@mahomeless.org) or 781-595-7570 x17.**

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