



Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

January 31, 2017

Greetings!

Thank you for your outreach this past week to your State Representative and Senator to ask them to [cosponsor key bills](#) on homelessness prevention, housing, and access to emergency services and income supports. **As the deadline for cosponsors is this Friday, we ask you to please continue your outreach.** It is making a difference! More details about the bills, initial cosponsors, and fact sheets can be found [here](#).

We also wanted to share with you a [quick overview Governor Charlie Baker's homelessness, housing, and benefits budget proposals](#) for fiscal year 2018 and [our budget chart](#). The Governor's complete House 1 budget can be found [here](#), and is the first step in the FY'18 budget process ahead of the July 1st start of the new fiscal year. In the months ahead, the House and Senate will release their own recommendations, and develop a compromise budget that then will be sent back to Governor Baker for approval or vetoes. We will be in touch throughout the process with updates and advocacy opportunities.

Budget Update: Governor Baker's FY'18 Budget  
Recommendations  
January 26, 2017

Yesterday, Governor Baker issued his FY'18 state budget recommendations. His \$40.5 billion budget included both positive and negative recommendations on homelessness, housing, and benefits programs.

- On the plus side, the Governor recommended an \$11 million increase to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP, line item 7004-9024), from \$86.5 million to \$97.5 million.
- He recommended level funding of \$2 million for the youth and young adult homelessness line item (4000-0007). While we are looking for an investment of \$4 million, it is important that the Governor is not seeking to cut the program as he did in past years.
- On the minus side, the Governor once again proposes drastic cuts to TAFDC welfare benefits (line item 4403-2000) for an estimated 5,800 families with disabilities by counting SSI benefits received by parents.
- The Governor also is seeking to maintain current harmful Emergency Assistance eligibility criteria that require many families to prove that they have stayed in a place not meant for human habitation before being approved for EA shelter (line item 7004-0101) or for HomeBASE rehousing/stabilization resources (line item 7004-0108).

Action step: Let the Governor know your feelings about his FY'18 budget.

Phone/Email Information: <http://www.mass.gov/governor/constituent-services/contact-governor-office/> and Twitter: @MassGovernor

Stay tuned and find out more at [www.mahomeless.org/advocacy](http://www.mahomeless.org/advocacy).



**MASSACHUSETTS  
LEGISLATORS:**

Please cosponsor key bills to provide homelessness prevention, housing, and increased access to emergency resources + supports.

.....  
Your actions can help prevent homelessness + promote housing stability!

[WWW.MAHOMELESS.ORG/  
ADVOCACY/ITEM/  
2017-2018-BILL-PRIORITIES](http://WWW.MAHOMELESS.ORG/ADVOCACY/ITEM/2017-2018-BILL-PRIORITIES)



**You can find your legislators' direct contact information by entering your address details [here](#) or by dialing the State House switchboard, 617-722-2000.**

**We are trying to get as many bills sponsors as possible signed on by this Friday, February 3rd, so your help will be greatly appreciated!**

Thank you so much for your commitment and action. We look forward to working with you to move these bills forward and to create a strong FY'18 budget for people experiencing homelessness and housing instability! If you are in any of these districts, please pass along our extra special thanks to our lead bill sponsors: Representatives Decker, Khan, O'Day, Pignatelli, and Provost, and Senators Chandler, DiDomenico, Eldridge, Forry, and Jehlen.

We will be back in touch in the coming days and weeks with more details about our upcoming Legislative Action Day, which will be held on Monday, February 27th at the State House in the Great Hall ([more details](#) and [registration form](#)).

**\*Please let me know how your calls and outreach go!\***

With gratitude,

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



**Please Cosponsor the Coalition's 2017-2018 Legislative Session Bill Priorities:  
Preventing Homelessness and Improving Quality of Life for  
Families, Youth, Elders, and People with Disabilities**

**1.) An Act Relative to Assisting Elders and People with Disabilities in the Commonwealth  
Lead Sponsors: Representative James O'Day and Senator Patricia Jehlen  
House Docket 2295**

This bill would:

- Increase monthly grants under the Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children Program (EAEDC) to match the benefit levels provided under the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program for households of comparable size
- Remove the 70% benefit reduction/penalty for individuals experiencing homelessness, who have their average grants reduced from \$303.70/month to \$92.80/month
- Increase the allowable personal asset limit from \$250 to \$2,500
- Create an annual cost of living adjustment for EAEDC program participants

**2.) An Act Providing a Homeless Bill of Rights/Creating a Bill of Rights for People Experiencing Homelessness  
Lead Sponsors: Representative William Smitty Pignatelli and Senator Linda Dorcena Forry  
House Docket 691 and Senate Docket 1548**

These bills would:

- Ensure that people experiencing homelessness have the same rights as any other resident of Massachusetts by seeking to prevent discrimination based on housing status
- Reinforce the rights to move freely in public spaces, receive equal treatment by municipal agencies, experience freedom from discrimination in employment, receive emergency medical care, register to vote and to vote, experience freedom from unauthorized disclosure of records (in accordance with relevant laws), and have a reasonable expectation of privacy of property
- Outline these rights as a statement of legislative intent, as a guide for state and municipal agencies

**3.) An Act to Further Provide a Rental Arrearage Program  
Lead Sponsor: Representative Marjorie Decker  
House Docket 1250**

This bill would reestablish a rental arrearage program under the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), based on the successful homelessness prevention program administered by the Department for many years. The new program would continue to provide up to four months of assistance to pay for back rent or mortgage payments, and now would serve families, individuals, and unaccompanied youth with incomes up to 130% of the federal poverty guidelines. Agencies participating in the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness would collaborate with DTA to refer potential participants and provide wraparound support services.

**4.) An Act to Protect Families Experiencing Homelessness from Having to Sleep in Unsafe Places  
Lead Sponsor: Representative Marjorie Decker  
House Docket 1245**

This bill would direct the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to provide Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter to otherwise eligible families with children without requiring families to prove that they already have stayed in a place not meant for human habitation, such as a car, emergency room, or campground.

**5.) An Act to End Child Homelessness  
Lead Sponsor: Representative Denise Provost  
House Docket 969**

(Version 1-25-17; Continued on reverse side)

(Click on the image above or below to access the PDF version.)

This bill (HD 969) would:

- Protect many children and families who are at imminent risk or experiencing homelessness from having to stay in places not meant for human habitation
- Require the Department of Children and Families (DCF), in consultation with the Department of Housing and Community Development to conduct an assessment to ensure that no child under the age of 18 would be forced to stay in a place not meant for human habitation upon a household's eviction from subsidized housing or termination from a publicly funded shelter
- For children at risk of having to stay in such conditions, DCF and DHCD would develop and implement a plan to ensure that they are housed in a safe location, with every reasonable effort being made to keep those children in the care and custody of their parents/guardians

**6.) An Act to Prevent Homelessness among Recipients of Transitional Assistance**

**Lead sponsor: Representative Denise Provost**

**House Docket 968**

This bill, also known as the No Place Like Home Bill, would:

- Establish a homelessness prevention and early intervention program within the Department of Transitional Assistance to give DTA the tools to help families and individuals remain housed.
- Direct DTA to conduct housing stability screenings for families and individuals participating in DTA's cash and nutritional assistance programs
- Create a statewide homelessness prevention fund at DTA, targeting the lowest income family and individual households who are often ineligible for, or unable to access, other resources in a timely way
- Create escrow accounts for families and individuals experiencing homelessness while they are participating in the Department's cash assistance programs. Currently, households have their monthly cash assistance grants reduced if they do not have housing expenses. Under the No Place Like Home bill, these funds would be captured and directed into an escrow account to be used by the household to help in obtaining or retaining housing

**7.) An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families**

**Lead Sponsors: Representative Kay Khan and Senator Harriette Chandler**

**House Docket 2272 and Senate Docket 1467**

This bill would direct the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) to eliminate fees and reduce barriers for people experiencing homelessness, unaccompanied youth, and others, if needed to ease access to Massachusetts identification cards.

**8.) An Act Relative to the Well Being and Care of a Child**

**Lead Sponsors: Representative Marjorie Decker and Senator Sal DiDomenico**

**House Docket 1262 and Senate Docket 176**

This bill would eliminate the so-called "family cap rule" that currently prohibits 9,400 children from receiving Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (TAFDC) benefits because their family was participating in the TAFDC program at the time of their conception (or shortly thereafter). This punitive and misguided policy has left thousands of Massachusetts families further in poverty. The bill would allow Massachusetts to join 33 other states that do not punish families with such limits on access to vital welfare benefits.

**9.) An Act Relative to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program**

**Lead Sponsor: Senator Jamie Eldridge**

**Senate Docket 1163**

This bill would put the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) in state statute, and would connect allowable rent levels to the current fair market rents as established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (Currently, households receiving new subsidies are expected to find units at or below the 2005 FMRs, unless a waiver is issued. This makes the housing search process more arduous and sometimes impossible, given the current rental climate in Massachusetts.)

For more information, please contact Kelly Turley, Director of Legislative Advocacy, at 781-595-7570 x17 or [kelly@mahomeless.org](mailto:kelly@mahomeless.org).

**Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless**  
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**SPEAK OUT TO END HOMELESSNESS!**

JOIN THE MASSACHUSETTS COALITION  
FOR THE HOMELESS FOR



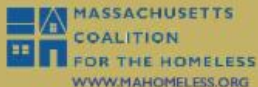
# LEGISLATIVE ACTION DAY 2017

Hosted by Representative Jim O'Day

Monday, February 27<sup>th</sup>  
9:00 am - 3:00 pm

**The Great Hall, Massachusetts State House**  
24 Beacon St., Boston, MA

REGISTER HERE: <https://goo.gl/forms/ftwqNXmmkuFLJCKv1>



For more information or to volunteer, contact:  
[alliemahomeless@gmail.com](mailto:alliemahomeless@gmail.com),  
[kelly@mahomeless.org](mailto:kelly@mahomeless.org),  
781-595-7570 ext. 22 or 17

STAY CONNECTED:

