

Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP)

Line Item # 7004-9030

The Alternative Housing Voucher Program provides mobile housing vouchers to individuals with disabilities under 60 years old who qualify for Chapter 667. In 1995, when the program was first launched, there were 800 vouchers. Now there are only 549.

AHVP works to keep people housed. All contacted housing authorities reported that, once someone gets a voucher and is able to find an apartment with it, they stay there long-term. Housing Authorities reported that waiting lists were so long because vouchers only become available when people die or move into elderly/disabled housing. In fact, it is the program's success in keeping people housed that contributes to its long waiting lists. But the success of AHVP is in danger.

The Problem:

- As of March 2017, **1,440 adults with disabilities are currently on the waiting list for an AHVP voucher** in 14 of the 23 issuing Public Housing Authorities.
- Those waiting can expect to spend **over 5 years** waiting for housing assistance.
- People with disabilities are **more than twice as likely** as the nondisabled population to experience homelessness, and are at a significantly higher risk of experiencing housing insecurity.
- The single most important factor in whether a person can stay healthy is whether or not they have housing. For people with disabilities, who already fight to stay healthy, this is especially true.
- There are **99 adults in Massachusetts** currently warehoused in institutional settings like nursing homes who could utilize AHVP to regain their independence.

The rent ceiling on AHVP vouchers has not been raised since 2005, and is currently the lowest of any voucher program in Massachusetts. Housing Authorities report landlords are refusing vouchers or evicting voucher holders because they want to charge higher rents. Many voucher holders are operating under a waiver that allows them to pay more than 30% of their income in rent to make up the difference between the static rent-ceiling and rising rents. **Half of the housing authorities interviewed said people have to move outside of their township to find an apartment that has low enough rent.**

The Solution:

Vote to increase AHVP's funding to \$7.5 million. This will:

- Assist people with disabilities secure long-term, stable housing.
- Allow people in nursing homes to regain their freedom by moving them back into their communities so they can contribute and live full, meaningful lives.
- Raise the rent-ceiling so that it reflects 2017 rental prices, stabilizing the situations of people who currently rely on these vouchers to stay housed.

Please contact Shaya French (sfrench@bostoncil.org) or Lenny Somervell (lsomervell@dpcma.org) with any questions.

Where Vouchers Are Issued:

Local Housing Authority	Vouchers
Acton	21
Amherst	20
Andover	5
Barnstable	13
Brockton	63
Cambridge	77
Charlton	18
Chelsea	8
Fitchburg	8
Holyoke	20
Ipswich	8
Lynn	23
Marlboro	4
Melrose	2
New Bedford	25
Newburyport	3
Provincetown H. A./HAC	4
Revere	98
Sandwich	23
Sharon	6
Spencer	47
Springfield	20
Westfield	17
Whitman	12
Worcester	4
Total	549



After 3 years in nursing home care, Sue O'Brien was able to transition into her own subsidized apartment in time to celebrate Christmas 2014 with her family.

Increasing AHVP funding will stabilize individuals and communities throughout Massachusetts.

