



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION
FOR THE HOMELESS

LEGISLATIVE ACTION DAY



Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home.

2018

Media Advisory: Important Legislative Action Day Next Tuesday on Key Homelessness and Housing Issues at the State House

WHAT: The Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless (“the Coalition”) will hold its annual Legislative Action Day on Tuesday, February 27th at the State House. The event will mobilize more than 250 families, youth, and adults experiencing homelessness, legislative cosponsors, and allies to take action in support of key legislative and budgetary campaigns on homelessness and housing issues, and provide an opportunity for legislators, their staff, and the public to learn more about the Coalition’s work to prevent and end homelessness in the Commonwealth. State Representative Jim O’Day (D-West Boylston), the House Chair of the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, will be hosting Legislative Action Day.

Among the areas of focus are a joint budget and bill campaign to overturn existing state policies that require many children and families who are experiencing homelessness to stay in places not meant for human habitation before becoming eligible for Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter. Since the policy was implemented in late 2012, more than 3,000 otherwise eligible families have stayed in hospital emergency departments, cars, campgrounds, transit stations, and other unsafe places before being approved for shelter and rehousing services by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Participants will push for changes to the state’s budget language for the Emergency Assistance program (line item 7004-0101) and passage of An Act to Protect Families Experiencing Homelessness from Having to Sleep in Unsafe Places, House Bill 659. House Bill 659 was filed by Representative Marjorie Decker of Cambridge and cosponsored by 42 other legislators. It currently is awaiting action by the House Committee on Ways and Means. Language similar to the bill language has been included in the Senate version of the state budget the past several years.

Participants also will push for increased funds for critical programs such as the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition homelessness prevention program (RAFT, line item 7004-9316), housing and services for unaccompanied youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness (line item 4000-0007), the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP, line item 7004-9024), and the Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children program (EAEDC, line item 4408-1000). The group also will ask lawmakers to pass legislation to create a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness (House Bill 695/Senate Bill 46), establish a rental arrearage program to help households avoid eviction and homelessness (House Bill 84), and to remove cost burdens and excess verification barriers for people experiencing homelessness who are in need of Massachusetts identification cards (House Bill 2737/Senate Bill 1906).

WHO: Scheduled speakers include:

- Representative James O’Day, House Chair, Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, lead House sponsor of An Act Relative to Assisting Elders and People with Disabilities in the Commonwealth (a.k.a. the EAEDC bill, House Bill 2077)
- Senate President Harriette Chandler, lead sponsor of An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families (Senate Bill 1906)
- Representative Marjorie Decker, House Vice Chair, Joint Committee on Rules, and lead sponsor House Bill 659, House Bill 84, and An Act Relative to the Well Being and Care of a Child (House Bill 85)

- Representative Byron Rushing, Assistant Majority Leader
- Senator Joseph Boncore, Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Housing and the Joint Committee on Transportation
- Senator Patricia Jehlen, Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Marijuana Policy and lead Senate sponsor of An Act Relative to Assisting Elders and People with Disabilities in the Commonwealth (Senate Bill 2039)
- Senator Jamie Eldridge, Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Financial Services and lead sponsor of An Act Relative to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (Senate Bill 719)
- Representative Kevin Honan, House Chair, Joint Committee on Housing
- Mayor Marc McGovern, Mayor and City Councillor, City of Cambridge and Convener of the Metro Boston Homelessness Summit
- Kelly Turley, Associate Director, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
- Tina Giarla, Community Organizer/Legislative Advocate, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
- Ana María Mesa, Legislative Advocacy Intern, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
- Dustin Pardy, Community Speaker, Boston Youth Advisory Board
- Maxwell Nashashuk, Community Speaker on youth homelessness
- Lynnette Martin, Community Speaker on family homelessness
- Julie Batten, Community Speaker, Glass House Shelter Project
- Marybeth, Community Speaker, Worcester Fellowship
- Christine, Community Speaker, Somerville Homeless Coalition
- Dr. Amanda Stewart, M.D., Boston Pediatrician
- Savina Martin, Eastern Chair, Massachusetts Poor People's Campaign
- Akriti Bhambi, Legislative Director, Office of Representative Marjorie Decker
- Cinda Danh, Staff Director, Office of Representative Jim O'Day

WHEN: Tuesday, February 27, 2018, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.; with speaking portion 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. and legislative visits 1:00–3:00 p.m.

WHERE: Massachusetts State House, Great Hall, Second Floor

WHY: Across the Commonwealth, thousands of households are experiencing homelessness and/or struggling with housing instability. Concrete action can and should be taken at the state level to promote homelessness prevention, housing stability, human rights, and human dignity. As the House and Senate develop their FY'19 budget proposals and debate pending legislation during the final 5 months of formal legislative sessions, the Coalition and allies seek to elevate key homelessness and housing solutions.

HOW: For interviews, please contact Kelly Turley at kelly@mahomeless.org or [617-652-0472](tel:617-652-0472) (cell). Please also find resources at www.mahomeless.org/advocacy/item/legislative-action-day-2018.

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