



**Please Do All You Can to Override
Governor Baker's Veto of the Language
to Expand Access to the RAFT
Homelessness Prevention Program
(Line Item 7001-9316)!**

The Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless has collected testimonies in support of expanding the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition homelessness prevention program (RAFT, line item 7004-9316). This expansion would provide access to RAFT housing resources to elders, people with disabilities, unaccompanied youth, and other households without minor children. Please override the Governor's veto and restore the FY'17 budget language that would expand access to RAFT!

MAUREEN SMITH

"Since 2011, I have experienced homelessness. I lost everything after spending my days and nights at my son's bedside while he recovered from a traumatic injury while serving as a Marine, leaving him as a quadriplegic person.

Gratefully, I was able to stay with friends from church, and relatives until our differences put me back onto the streets in Beverly. I spent 9 weeks walking the streets by day, and trying to find a dark corner to sleep in by night. I often was harassed by youth and chased away.

Due to my experience facing homelessness, I have been diagnosed with PTSD, anxiety, and depression. I am struggling every day. Still, I am an active member of society, and I work hard. Sadly, I can't even afford to save up for my own apartment. I live in poverty, yet I cannot receive assistance. It seems like no one cares that my only options are to walk the streets or to live in a shelter without any way or assistance to get onto my feet.

Currently, I work 35 hours a week as a barista and live at a shelter in Salem. I do not make enough money to survive and save up for first [and] last [months' rent], and security [deposit] for an apartment. I have enrolled in school to try to help myself find a better job. I have never experienced homelessness before, and I do not want to be set further back.

Today, if RAFT were available to individuals without minor children, I would use the assistance for first, last and security deposit for a single room occupancy, somewhere close to my daughter who attends college."

COLLETTE GOSHAW

"My situation that led to homelessness was rapid and devastating. I am a college-educated professional, and worked as a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant. I worked with elderly patients for over 20 years before deciding to become a live-in caregiver. That decision was based upon being unable to support myself in an apartment of my own. With rising costs and being dependent upon one income, I could no longer afford rent and living costs. In order to prevent homelessness after being evicted from my apartment, I moved in with the elderly women in Andover as her caregiver. I was given room and board with a \$100 stipend each week.

After one year, the woman I was caring for had a decline in health and was moved to an assisted living facility. I was left without a home, and without enough money to fund a living space. I became suicidal. I was admitted to a psychiatric facility due to my mental instability. As soon as I was admitted, discharge planning began. I was discharged to a homeless shelter. I was homeless and felt scared, emotionally devastated, and broken.

I began spending the next few months living in homeless shelters, hospitals to deal with my depression and anxiety, and in programs for sobriety, as I also became addicted to alcohol while trying to cope with my life at 51-years old. I was homeless, unemployed, and unemployable due to my lack of permanent address.

I currently reside in a homeless shelter. I have no income, still no employment opportunities, and am begging to find help. I am very disappointed to find an extreme lack of support for single individuals without children. **With the small amount RAFT could have provided, I would not have been evicted, I could have maintained my living costs and may not have ended up where I am today. Today, if RAFT were available to me, I would once again have an opportunity to find hope, exit a homeless shelter, and take action to find a place where I can attain independence again."**

JULIE GORDY

"My homelessness began on November 3, 2011. I found myself looking for work, but it seemed as if I was too old to be hired.

During my time staying in shelters throughout Massachusetts, I have been hospitalized with chronic bacteria pneumonia 14 times and ended up in 3 comas due to severe declines in my health. I am just in-between bouts. Being 60-years old, I am just beginning to face my senior years of life homeless. Though I live in a shelter, it is at the cost of illness. When I am not in a shelter, I'm in the hospital or nursing homes, trying to recoup from illness.

Today had RAFT been available to me, I could get the first and last months' rent and a security deposit that would help me get on my feet and gain stability."

JOE

Joe is a retired 67-year-old man with a monthly pension. Joe and his wife were getting by, but then his wife was diagnosed with untreatable cancer. After a short battle, Joe's wife passed away. Joe's two sons did not deal with the loss well. Within two months of Joe's wife passing, his oldest son overdosed and died, and his younger son, overwhelmed with the family's double tragedy, committed suicide.

The loss of his family sent Joe into spiral that left him with enormous medical bills that led him to lose his home. Joe spent months on the streets looking for help and was told he did not qualify because he did not have any dependent children. Joe was put on a waiting list for elder housing and was told it would be 2 to 6 years before a unit would be available. Joe has remained without stable housing, in and out of shelters, hotels, hospitals, and sleeping behind local businesses throughout this past winter.

Due to the cost of living periodically in hotels to stay warm, Joe cannot save enough money to afford first month's rent, last month's rent, and a security deposit at market rent. **"I believe that RAFT is an essential prevention resources for individuals like Joe, who have been forgotten by the current system,"** said Pamela Edwards, a Community Organizer at the Massachusetts Senior Action Council.

**Please restore the FY'17 budget language that would expand access to RAFT.
Override Governor Baker's RAFT veto!**

For more information about the RAFT override campaign, please contact the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless: Kelly Turley, Director of Legislative Advocacy, kelly@mahomeless.org, 781-595-7570 x17 or Tina Giarla, Community Organizer/Legislative Advocate, tina@mahomeless.org, 781-595-7570 x16.