



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

## Governor Baker's FY'16 Budget Proposals for Housing, Homelessness, and Safety Net Programs

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, Governor Charlie Baker released his proposed fiscal year 2016 budget, known as the "House 1 budget". His recommendations now will be examined by the Legislature, as they develop their own budget proposals on the path to finalizing the budget for the state fiscal year that will begin on July 1st. To see his complete recommendations, please go to <http://www.mass.gov/bb/h1/fy16h1>.

Here are some highlights:

- **Housing and services for unaccompanied youth (DHCD line item 7004xxxx and EOHHS line item 4000-0300):** The Governor's budget did not include explicit funding for housing and services for unaccompanied youth. We will continue to advocate for \$4 million in the FY'16 budget. Help us by signing this online action to your legislators today. Go to [http://www.mahomeless.org/files/youth\\_campaign\\_budget\\_request\\_2-25-15.pdf](http://www.mahomeless.org/files/youth_campaign_budget_request_2-25-15.pdf) to see our fact sheet.
- **Emergency Assistance family shelter and services program (EA, line item 7004-0101):** The Governor recommended funding the EA program at \$154.9 million. This level is far below the anticipated FY'15 spending level of over \$190 million. He also proposed eliminating two major subcategories of EA eligibility: 1.) Families experiencing homelessness who have "irregular housing" and need to engage in chronic couch surfing. As an example, this would include families without permanent housing who move five times in one week; 2.) Families experiencing homelessness who are staying temporarily in a unit unfit for human habitation.  
  
For the first half of fiscal year 2015, such families accounted for over 30% of the new entries into shelter. We are very concerned, and strongly urge the Legislature to reject this proposal. The Governor's budget also eliminates language that would require the Administration to give the Legislature 60 days advanced notice before implementing restrictions or benefits reductions, as well as language protecting families from unreasonable verification requirements. Go to [http://www.mahomeless.org/files/EA\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_FY16\\_2-17-15.pdf](http://www.mahomeless.org/files/EA_Fact_Sheet_FY16_2-17-15.pdf) to see the Coalition and Massachusetts Law Reform Institute's fact sheet.
- **End Family Homelessness Reserve Fund (new line item 1599-0017):** In addition to the Governor's proposals on EA, he also recommended setting aside \$20 million in an account under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services for homelessness prevention resources for families. It is unclear how families who would be newly ineligible for shelter under the Governor's proposal would access such funds. While many of the details of the proposed program remain to be fleshed out, the line item describes the program in this way: "For a homelessness prevention reserve at the executive office of health and human services; provided, that funds shall be used to provide tailored and flexible short-term assistance to families that are homeless with a goal of rapid housing stabilization; provided further, that the funds may be used for prevention, diversion, or stabilization; provided further, that the secretary of health and human services may, with the approval of the secretary of administration and finance, transfer from this item amounts necessary to meet any costs associated with the purposes of this item; and provided further, that the department may enter into interagency service agreements as needed."
- **HomeBASE (line item 7004-0108):** The Governor recommended funding the HomeBASE program at \$26.25 million. This is just above the current FY'15 HomeBASE funding of \$26 million, but at least \$4 million less than the amount DHCD will need to continue the program until the end of this fiscal year.
- **Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP, line item 7004-9024):** The Governor recommended funding MRVP at \$75.4 million. This matches the updated estimate from DHCD for level funding existing subsidies. The

Coalition and other advocacy groups will continue to push for \$100 million in FY'16 to ensure that new subsidies to tenants and developers will be available to address homelessness and housing instability. Go to [http://www.mahomeless.org/files/MRVP\\_FACT\\_SHEET\\_FY1\\_2-13-15.pdf](http://www.mahomeless.org/files/MRVP_FACT_SHEET_FY1_2-13-15.pdf) to see the Housing Solutions Campaign fact sheet.

- **Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP, line item 7004-9030):** The Governor recommended level funding AHVP at \$3.55 million. The Coalition and other advocacy groups will continue to push for \$7 million for this critical housing subsidy program for individuals under the age of 60 living with disabilities. Go to [http://www.mahomeless.org/files/AHVP\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_FY16\\_bcil\\_and\\_mch\\_1-22-15.pdf](http://www.mahomeless.org/files/AHVP_Fact_Sheet_FY16_bcil_and_mch_1-22-15.pdf) to see the fact sheet from the Coalition and the Boston Center for Independent Living.
- **Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT, line item 7004-9316):** The Governor recommended level funding RAFT at \$11 million. The Coalition will continue to push for an increase up to \$15 million and an expansion of the definition of family to include various household arrangements, including unaccompanied adults, couples without minor children, etc.
- **Shelter and services for unaccompanied adults (line item 7004-0102):** The Governor recommended funding the line item that supports shelters and services for unaccompanied adults at \$40.8 million. The Coalition will continue to push for at least level funding of \$42.9 million in FY'16.
- **Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children Program (EAEDC, line item 4408-1000):** The Governor recommended funding EAEDC at \$78.9 million, based on their current caseload projections. The Governor's budget also eliminates language that would require the Administration to give the Legislature advanced notice before implementing restrictions or benefits reductions. The Coalition will continue to push for adequate funding to avoid benefit reductions, and advanced notice language. Through the bill process, we will continue to work for program improvements through the EAEDC bill (newly numbered House Bill 529). Go to [http://www.mahomeless.org/files/Improving\\_Emergency\\_Aid\\_to\\_the\\_Elderly\\_and\\_Disabled\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_with\\_docket\\_number\\_endorsing\\_organizations\\_updated\\_2-20-15.pdf](http://www.mahomeless.org/files/Improving_Emergency_Aid_to_the_Elderly_and_Disabled_Fact_Sheet_with_docket_number_endorsing_organizations_updated_2-20-15.pdf) to see the EAEDC bill fact sheet.
- **Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program (TAFDC, line item 4403-2000):** The Governor recommended funding TAFDC at \$229.1 million, based on their current caseload projections. The Governor's budget also eliminates language that would require the Administration to give the Legislature advanced notice before implementing restrictions or benefits reductions. The Coalition will continue to push for adequate funding to avoid benefit reductions, advanced notice language, and the fair implementation of last session's welfare reform bill.
- **Education transportation for students experiencing homelessness (line item 7035-0008):** The Governor recommended increasing funding for McKinney-Vento related school transportation by \$1 million, up to \$8.35 million. The Coalition supports this increase, and will keep pushing for full funding, estimated to be \$14.9 million.

**Please stay tuned for a budget chart comparing the FY'15 and proposed FY'16 budgets and additional analysis.**

**For more details, please reach out to Kelly Turley at [kelly@mahomeless.org](mailto:kelly@mahomeless.org)/781-595-7570 x17.**