

**Special Commission on Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness:  
Final FY'13 Budget Language as Adopted and Signed into Law**

SECTION 208. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, there shall be a special commission for the purpose of studying and making recommendations relative to services for unaccompanied homeless youth age 22 and younger, with the goal of ensuring a comprehensive and effective response to the unique needs of this population. The focus of the commission's work shall include, but not be limited to: (i) an analysis of the barriers to serving unaccompanied youth who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender; (ii) an analysis of the barriers to serving unaccompanied youth under 18 years of age; (iii) an assessment of the impact of mandated reporting requirements on unaccompanied youths' access to services; (iv) the commonwealth's ability to identify and connect with unaccompanied youth; and (v) recommendations to reduce identified barriers to serving this population including, but not limited to, extending the time for certain categories of mandated reporters to file reports and establishing special licensure provisions to allow service providers to serve homeless youth under 18 years of age. The commission, in formulating its recommendations, shall take account of best practices and policies in other states and jurisdictions.

The commission shall include: the secretary of health and human services or a designee, who shall serve as chair; the commissioner of children and families or a designee; the commissioner of elementary and secondary education or a designee; the commissioner of public health or a designee; the commissioner of mental health or a designee; the director of Medicaid or a designee; the commissioner of transitional assistance or a designee; the undersecretary of housing and community development or a designee; 2 members of the senate; 2 members of the house of representatives; 3 youth who have experienced homelessness appointed by the office of the child advocate; 3 direct service providers who work with unaccompanied homeless youth to be appointed by the governor; and 1 representative from each of the following organizations: the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, the Task Force on Youth Aging Out, the Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, MassEquality, the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition and the Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender Youth.

The commission shall submit its initial report to the governor, the speaker of the house, the senate president, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities and the office of the child advocate not later than March 31, 2013. The report shall set forth the commission's findings and any recommendations for regulatory or legislative action with a timeline for implementation, cost estimates and finance mechanisms. Thereafter, the commission shall submit a report by December 31, annually, to the governor, the speaker of the house, the senate president, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities and the office of the child advocate, detailing the extent of homelessness among unaccompanied youth within the commonwealth and the progress made toward implementing the commission's recommendations, along with other efforts to address the needs of this population.

-July 2012