



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

2015-2016 Legislative Session Bill Priorities: Improving Quality of Life for Elders, People with Disabilities, and Families, Youth, and Adults Experiencing Homelessness

1.) An Act Relative to Assisting Elders and People with Disabilities in the Commonwealth House Bill 529

Lead sponsors: Representative James O'Day and Senator Patricia Jehlen

This bill would:

- Increase monthly grants under the Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children Program (EAEDC) to match the benefit levels provided under the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program for households of comparable size
- Remove the 70% benefit reduction/penalty for individuals experiencing homelessness
- Increase the allowable personal asset limit from \$250 to \$2,500
- Create an annual cost of living adjustment for EAEDC program participants

2.) An Act Providing a Homeless Bill of Rights

House Bill 1129

Lead Sponsor: Representative William Smitty Pignatelli

This bill would:

- Ensure that people experiencing homelessness have the same rights as any other resident of Massachusetts by seeking to prevent discrimination based on housing status
- Reinforce the following rights:
 - The right to move freely in public spaces
 - The right to equal treatment by municipal agencies
 - Freedom from discrimination in employment
 - The right to emergency medical care
 - The right to register to vote and to vote
 - Freedom from unauthorized disclosure of records, in accordance with relevant laws
 - The right to a reasonable expectation of privacy of property
- Outline these rights as a statement of legislative intent, as a guide for state and municipal agencies

3.) An Act to End Child Homelessness

House Bill 119

Lead sponsor: Representative Denise Provost

This bill would:

- Protect many children and families who are at imminent risk or experiencing homelessness from having to stay in places not meant for human habitation
- Require the Department of Children and Families (DCF), in consultation with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), to conduct an assessment to ensure that

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no child under the age of 18 would be forced to stay in a place not meant for human habitation upon a household's eviction from subsidized housing or termination from a publicly funded shelter

- For children at risk of having to stay in such conditions, DCF and DHCD would develop and implement a plan to ensure that they are housed in a safe location, with every reasonable effort being made to keep those children in the care and custody of their parents/guardians.

4.) An Act Relative to Ensuring the Wellbeing of All Children in the Commonwealth

House Bill 429/Senate Bill 94

Lead sponsors: Representative Jay Livingstone and Senator Mark Montigny

This bill would:

- Allow families at imminent risk of staying in places not meant for human habitation to immediately access emergency shelter, if otherwise eligible for the Emergency Assistance program
- Ensure that children in emergency shelter have the transportation needed to get to medical appointments
- Increase access to food benefits such as SNAP, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the School Breakfast Program
- Assess the capacity of schools to screen for medical conditions that prevent students from learning
- Require data sharing between state agencies to streamline applications and eliminate duplicative processes

For more information, please contact Kelly Turley, Director of Legislative Advocacy, at 781-595-7570 x17 or kelly@mahomeless.org.

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