



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

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



Support and Protect Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness from Having to Sleep in Unsafe Places:

Cosponsor and Actively Support the Adoption of Representative Decker’s Emergency Assistance Amendment, Amendment #1124, to Line Item 7004-0101 in the FY’20 Budget

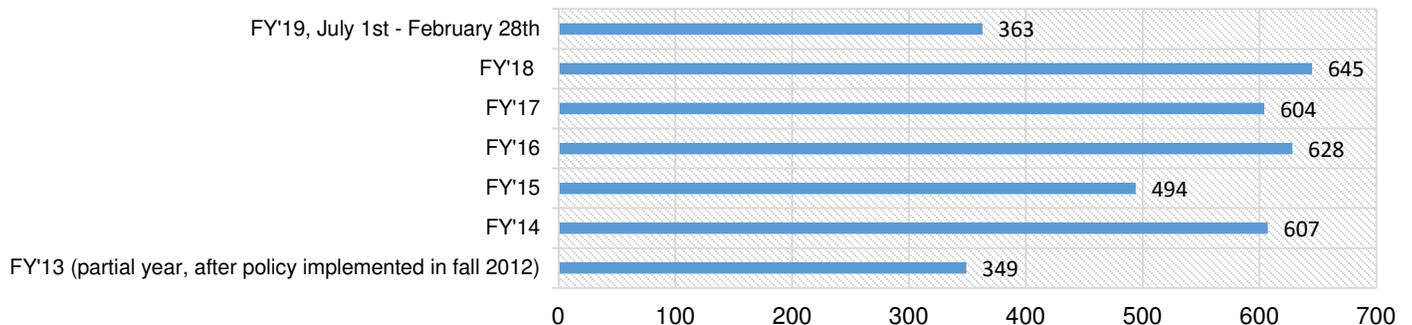
Representative Decker’s amendment, Amendment #1124, would create a \$300,000 pilot to allow otherwise eligible families to access Emergency Assistance family shelter (EA) before having to prove that they already have stayed in places not meant for human habitation.

Amendment Details:

- Amendment language: “provided further, that not more than \$300,000 shall be expended to establish and administer a pilot program to provide temporary emergency assistance to families who on the date of application for emergency assistance have no other feasible alternative housing, as defined in 760 CMR 67.06.1(b), and who, but for not having spent 1 night in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including but not limited to a car, park, abandoned building, medical facility, bus or train station, airport or camping ground, would be eligible for emergency assistance under clauses (a), (b), (c) or (d);”; and by striking out the figures “\$165,745,706” and inserting in place thereof the figures “\$166,045,706”
- Based on the state’s own data, **645 families with children** had to sleep in cars, bus stations, emergency rooms and other unsafe places in FY’18 (July 2017 through June 2018) *before* they were found eligible for emergency shelter through the state’s Emergency Assistance (EA) program. In the first eight months of FY’19, another **363 families** were approved for EA only after staying in such dire circumstances (16% of all families approved, for an average of 45 families/month).

Almost 3,700 Families Have Stayed in Places Not Meant for Human Habitation Before Being Able to Access State-Funded Emergency Assistance Shelter

* Data from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development



- Families are showing up at hospital clinics and emergency rooms **with no other safe place to sleep**, which in turn drives up health care costs. Educators across the state are expressing concern about the fate of their students whose educations are being disrupted as their families search for a safe place to sleep.
- This crisis is due to onerous shelter eligibility restrictions imposed by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in September 2012. Under these regulations, in the first eight months of FY'19, at least 42% of the families that applied for shelter were denied (2,147 out of 5,087 families that completed applications, as reported by DHCD). For FY'18, the denial rate was 40% (3,250 out of 8,145 families applying).
- Based on DHCD's own numbers, we estimate that approximately **700-1,000 families** per year will first have to stay in places not meant for human habitation before getting shelter if this new language is not adopted.
- If each of these families got placed in shelter one night earlier to avoid this fate, **the cost to the Commonwealth would be only about \$105,000-\$150,000 per year** (based on the average cost of \$150/night, as reported by DHCD in December 2018). Even if each family received shelter two nights earlier, the cost would be **\$300,000 or less per year**.

Budget Campaign Organizational Endorsers (Alphabetical list, as of April 2019):

Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.
Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness
AIDS Project Worcester
Allston Brighton Health Collaborative
Arise for Social Justice
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center
City Mission Boston
EMPath
Greater Boston Legal Services
Homes for Families
HomeStart, Inc.
Horizons For Homeless Children

Housing Families Inc.
HousingWorks.net
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee
MLPB
National Association of Social Workers- MA Chapter
Northeast Justice Center
Out Now
Poor People's United Fund
Rosie's Place

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For more information, please contact Kelly Turley of the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless at kelly@mahomeless.org or 781-595-7570 x17.



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