



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

April 24, 2017

Stand Up With and For People Experiencing Homelessness and Housing Instability: Please Actively Support Key FY'18 House Budget Amendments!



www.mahomeless.org/advocacy

As House budget debate week kicks off, the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless is asking for your continued support for the key homelessness and housing amendments, notably the amendments to **expand the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) homelessness prevention program (Amendment #90)**, **restore funding and language for housing and services for unaccompanied youth without homes (Amendments #1088 and #1013)**, **prevent families from having to stay in places not meant for human habitation (Amendment #85)**, and **eliminate the “homelessness penalty” in the Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children program (EAEDC, Amendment #1055)**. We hope that you will actively speak up for these amendments with

Leadership, in caucuses, and on the House floor.

Housing and Services for Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness:

Please actively support Representative O'Day's unaccompanied youth homelessness amendments, **Amendments #1088 and #1013**. The House Ways and Means budget eliminated line item 4000-0007, which currently provides \$2 million for housing and services for unaccompanied youth and young adults under the age of 25. The Coalition is seeking \$4 million for the line item in FY'18, as well as explicit language and funding in line item 4000-0003 for the work of the Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and the annual Massachusetts Youth Count. Amendment #1088 would restore the housing and services line item and increase funding to \$4 million (also see related amendment, **Amendment #378**, filed by Representative Decker), and Amendment #1013 would once again include language and \$150,000 in funding in the Executive Office of Health and Human Services administrative line item, 4000-0300, for the Commission and the annual Massachusetts Youth Count.

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Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program (RAFT):

Please actively support Representative Decker's RAFT amendment, **Amendment #90**. While RAFT would see an increase in funding from \$13 million to \$15 million in the current House budget proposal, House Ways and Means reverted to old RAFT eligibility language in line item 7004-9316 that would cut access to Residential Assistance for Families in Transition homelessness prevention benefits for households without children. For FY'17, the definition of family was expanded to include elders, people with disabilities, unaccompanied youth, and all household types. The amendment would maintain the expanded eligibility and increase overall funding from \$13 million to \$18.5 million.

Emergency Assistance Family Shelter and Services Program (EA):

Please actively support Representative Decker's amendment, **Amendment #85**, to remove harmful Emergency Assistance program eligibility criteria that requires many families to prove that they already have stayed in a place not meant for human habitation before being approved for EA shelter (line item 7004-0101) or for HomeBASE rehousing/stabilization resources (line item 7004-0108). In just the first eight months of FY'17, at least 432 families first stayed in places not meant for human habitation before being approved for shelter, exposing these parents to needless additional trauma and harm. Amendment #85 would allow otherwise eligible families to access shelter in a timely manner, before families are forced to stay in emergency rooms, cars, campgrounds, transit stations, and other places not meant for human habitation.

Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children Program (EAEDC):

Please actively support Representative O'Day EAEDC amendment, **Amendment #1055**. While the House Ways and Means budget would maintain eligibility for the Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children Program (line item 4408-1000), the budget proposal would retain the "homelessness penalty" that leaves EAEDC participants experiencing homelessness with drastically reduced monthly benefits as compared to EAEDC participants with housing costs (\$92.80/month vs. \$303.70/month). Amendment #1055 promotes dignity, fairness, and opportunity for participants experiencing homelessness by allowing them to receive the maximum monthly grant.

Thank you for your support thus far! We look forward to working with you and your staff this week to improve the FY'18 House budget for people experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

Please contact Kelly Turley at the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless with any questions or feedback: kelly@mahomeless.org, work: 781-595-7570 x17, or cell: 617-652-0472.