



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

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July 26, 2011

Providers and Youth from Around the State Attended a Public Hearing on July 19th to Urge Legislative Support for Representative O'Day's Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Bill (H.Bill 1862)

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[House Bill 1862](#)

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Dear Kelly,

On Tuesday, July 19th, advocates, service providers, youth who have experienced homelessness and members of faith communities attended a public hearing on **House Bill 1862** "An Act Providing Housing and Support Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth". They came to the State House from communities as far away as Greenfield to ask members of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities to report the bill out of Committee quickly with a favorable recommendation.

This bill, sponsored by [Representative Jim O'Day](#), would create housing and service programs for unaccompanied youth who are experiencing homelessness. In addition, the bill would create a special commission to examine the needs of unaccompanied youth, as well as ways to increase resources and improve service delivery to these young people.

Thank you to all who testified in person or submitted written letters of support. We also wish to thank Representative James O'Day and Senator Katherine Clark for taking time out of their busy schedule to personally testify on behalf of the bill. Those present for the hearing were heartened by Representative Kay Khan's statement that the Committee intends to support the bill and report it out quickly. Representative Khan is the House Chair of the Committee and a co-sponsor of the bill.

Members of the Coalition's Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Taskforce have recommended some changes to the bill before it is released. These suggestions include splitting the bill into two so that the funding request and the Special Commission component can move forward independently. We are still committed to raising money to address these critical needs. But the Commission's work is an important precursor to the development of an effective and comprehensive plan for improving services for this very vulnerable population. The Taskforce has also requested that the Committee broaden the mandate of the Commission establishing two working groups; one which will focus on developing recommendations for underage youth and another to focus on youth between the ages of 18 and 22 years.

The Committee has posted a video of the testimony presented at the hearing. [Click here for a link to this video.](#) The testimony on the bill begins 31 minutes into the video. You can change the counter at the bottom of the video to skip to this section.

[To view or download copies of the written testimony and letters of](#)

[support please visit the Coalition's website.](#)

While this hearing is an important milestone for the bill, it is only the first step on the road to passage. There are more opportunities to help, too. Please see below for more details.

For more information about the Coalition's work on unaccompanied youth issues, please contact Leslie Lawrence: leslie@mahomeless.org, 781-595-7570 x16 or Kelly Turley: kelly@mahomeless.org, 781-595-7570 x17.

What you can do in the weeks ahead to help win passage of the Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Bill.

- Educate your own State Representative and State Senator about the needs of homeless youth your community. (Contact the Coalition and let us know who you have contacted and the response).
- Let your legislator know about the hearing, and ask him or her to speak with the Chairs of the Committee and House and Senate leadership to express his/her support.
- Legislators can be reached through the State House switchboard: 617-722-2000, or directly through the numbers listed here: [Directory of Representatives](#) and [Directory of Senators](#) . To search for your legislators based on your address, please go to www.wheredoivotema.com .

Thank you for all of your support for unaccompanied young people who are experiencing homelessness!

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Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless



Please join us in raising money to help end homelessness, just by searching the Internet or shopping online with GoodSearch.

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