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October 19, 2011

## Take Action! Help Protect Access to Emergency Assistance and the HomeBASE Program for Children and Families!

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Dear friend,

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has unofficially announced plans to limit access to Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter and temporary housing subsidies through the new HomeBASE program. This decision is due to large anticipated deficits in both accounts.

Initially, we learned that DHCD was planning to implement some changes starting today, but have delayed their plans temporarily due to push back from legislators, advocates, and providers. Some of the changes, however, could be implemented as soon as Friday. (We still are awaiting confirmation from DHCD.)

**Please contact the Governor's office today to ask him to do all he can to retain access to housing and shelter for children and families experiencing homelessness!** The Governor's office can be reached by phone at 1-888-870-7770 or 617-725-4005.

Please see below for additional details and action steps.

Thanks for your swift action!

-Kelly

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### Additional Background Information

The Governor has submitted a [new supplemental budget request](#) to the Legislature this week, which includes a request for \$21 million for Emergency Assistance (line item 7004-0101) and \$18.2 million for HomeBASE (line item 7004-0108). This combined request for \$39.2 million for these programs, however, only represents a fraction of the amount needed to keep these programs whole for the fiscal year, due to the record number of families in need of assistance. We have learned that the real supplemental funding need may be greater than \$80 million. **We encourage the Legislature to support the request for supplemental funding, and to approve the amount actually needed to ensure that families have access to critical rehousing and shelter services.**

Without a significant infusion of funds, we have learned that DHCD may stop intake for HomeBASE for new applicants as early as Friday-- or only offer new applicants access to household assistance (up to \$4,000 in funds to relocate or pay off arrearages), instead of access to both household assistance and ongoing rental subsidies. If

that happens, only families already in shelters, motels, and the Flexible Funds program would be able to receive new HomeBASE rental assistance.

In addition, **DHCD may be planning to dramatically limit access to Emergency Assistance shelter** to only those new applicants who fall into the three categories originally proposed by Governor Patrick in his House 1 budget proposal:

- Families who are at risk of abuse in their current housing
- Families experiencing homelessness due to fire or natural disaster
- Families headed by a parent under the age of 21

Fortunately, **the FY'12 budget language requires DHCD to provide the Legislature with at least 60 days advanced notice if they are planning to limit EA eligibility in the face of a deficit.** We are working with key legislators to ensure that this budget language is enforced, allowing the Legislature time to take action to protect these programs.

**Please take action and stay tuned for additional details!**

### Take Action!

1.) Please contact **Governor Patrick's office today to ask him to do all he can to retain access to housing and shelter for children and families experiencing homelessness.** This includes requesting **adequate** supplemental funding to avoid the need for restricting families' access to Emergency Assistance and rehousing resources. The Governor's office can be reached by phone at 1-888-870-7770 or 617-725-4005.

Additional contact information, including an email form, is available [here](#).

2.) Please also **contact your State Representative and State Senator to ask for their support to protect families' access to Emergency Assistance and HomeBASE and to provide adequate supplemental funding to make this possible.**

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 legislator based on your address, please go to [www.wheredoivotema.com](http://www.wheredoivotema.com).

### Thank you for your advocacy!

Please contact Kelly Turley with any feedback on your conversations with lawmakers' offices: [kelly@mahomeless.org](mailto:kelly@mahomeless.org) or 781-595-7570 x17.

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Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless



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