



RESIDENTIAL ASSISTANCE
FOR FAMILIES IN TRANSITION
HOMELESSNESS
PREVENTION PROGRAM
LINE ITEM 7004-9316

**Expand the RAFT Homelessness Prevention Program in Fiscal Year 2018:
Increase funding to help more low-income households avoid or exit homelessness**

The Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program (RAFT, Line Item 7004-9316) is designed to allow eligible applicants to receive a maximum of \$4,000/year in flexible funds to help households avoid or exit homelessness. Typical uses for RAFT include funds for rent, mortgage, or utility arrears, first and last months' rent; utility startup costs, moving expenses, related household expenses, and/or employment-related transportation costs. RAFT provides short-term financial assistance to households with incomes at or below 50 percent of AMI. At least 50% of the funds are dedicated to households with incomes below 30% of area median income (AMI). RAFT is a program of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and is administered by 10 regional agencies across the Commonwealth.

For FY 2018, the Coalition and partners are asking the Legislature to deepen the overall investment in RAFT by increasing funding to \$18.5 million, up from the FY'17 funding level of \$13 million. We recommend that \$14.5 million be dedicated to families with dependent children under the age of 21, and \$4 million be dedicated to applicants who are eligible under the new definition of family included in the FY'17 budget, including elders, people with disabilities, unaccompanied youth, and families without dependent children.

According to the 2015-2016 RAFT report published by the Regional Housing Network of Massachusetts:

- Investing \$12.5 million into RAFT in FY'16 saved the Commonwealth an estimated \$137 million, by avoiding the high costs of emergency shelter.
- RAFT assistance was able to keep households stable on average 351 days (11.5 months) before the household had to access another resource dedicated to prevent or address homelessness.
- 95% of RAFT households used the aid to better their living situation without the need for more RAFT aid in the subsequent year.
- With \$18.5 million in FY'18, an estimated 6,016 households would be able to receive immediate resources to prevent homelessness, based on the average FY'16 RAFT expenditure of \$3,075/family (including the \$539 administrative fee per household approved).
- Ongoing RAFT funding is needed to help thousands of households on the edge. As the need for housing assistance grows, we must make sure the RAFT appropriation matches the demand to support residents when the housing and job markets do not.

To read the report, RAFT in Massachusetts 2015 – 2016: A survey of the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition program, in its entirety please visit: <https://goo.gl/wu8hxl>.

Action Step: Please ask your State Representative and Senator to speak up for increased RAFT funds for FY'18 to help more families and individuals across the Commonwealth to have a safe, stable place to call home. State House switchboard: 617-722-2000; www.wheredoivotema.com

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