



June 20, 2017

Representative Robert DeLeo
Representative Jeffrey Sanchez
House Ways and Means Committee
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Dear Representative DeLeo and Sanchez,

I write to you both today to offer information regarding the impact of the Governor Charlie Baker’s cuts to youth homelessness funding in the FY 18 budget.

LUK, Inc. is a nonprofit human services agency located in Central Massachusetts dedicated to improving the lives of children, youth, families and communities.

Between April 1, 2016 and March 31, 2017 LUK’s Transition to Independent Living (TIL) Services screened 479 young people for services. Each young person encountered had access to basic need supplies (ie. food, water, clothing, hygiene products), supportive referrals to emergent need services (ie. healthcare, shelter, food pantry/feeding sites, showers) and transportation (ie. bus tickets, cab vouchers, rides from staff). Additionally during this time, LUK’s TIL Services enrolled 39 unduplicated young people into state EOHHS funded services. This expanded our capacity to serve young people between 21 and 24 as federal funding ends at the 22nd birthday. These services include rental assistance, supervised apartments and supportive services.

In 2009 the Worcester Task Force on Teen Housing was established as a result of the rise in homeless youth in the city. In 2011 the Compass Project was created and over the next five years developed a coordinated network of low barrier access sites for homeless young people as well as a common screening tool to effectively assess their needs and refer them to services. LUK has participated with the Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth since its inception and has been a strong advocate for state funding for this underserved population. Until the creation of the Youth Committees, the only funds in the region designated specifically for unaccompanied homeless youth came from federal grants, all of which were held within LUK.

State EOHHS funding allowed us to serve 39 young people who would not have otherwise received services as well as to dedicate staff time to attending to each referral personally. Losing these resources would be a tragedy for these young people and future identified youth. While the dollars may seem small, they have helped change the lives of many. Please consider an override of the Governor's veto.

We appreciate your attention and advocacy on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Beth Barto, LMHC
Chief Executive Officer
LUK, Inc.



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