



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

Take Action to Codify and Improve the HomeBASE Family Rehousing Program:

Please cosponsor and actively support House Bill 1297 and Senate Bill 890, An Act promoting housing stability for families by strengthening the HomeBASE program

Sponsored by Representative Christine Barber and Senator Liz Miranda

[House Bill 1297](#) and [Senate Bill 890](#), An Act promoting housing stability for families by strengthening the HomeBASE program, would:

- Put the HomeBASE family rehousing program into state statute
- Direct the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) to provide HomeBASE benefits upstream to families who otherwise would be eligible for Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter
- Direct EOHLC to continue to provide renewals of HomeBASE rental assistance to eligible families and children after the first 24 months in the program
- Codify FY24 budget language that sets the maximum benefit levels at \$30,000 over the first 24 months and \$15,000 in subsequent renewal periods, while allowing a higher cap to be set in the annual state budget

If this bill becomes law, more families would be able to remain stably housed and more families would be able to exit shelter more quickly.

Importance of this legislation: HomeBASE is a short-term transitional housing program that provides families that are eligible for Emergency Assistance shelter with \$30,000 over the first 24 months and \$15,000 in subsequent renewal periods to be used for monthly help with rent, initial move-in costs, and/or resources to purchase basic furnishings, in tandem with case management and rehousing supports. Families can choose to use HomeBASE right after being approved for EA shelter or as a tool to exit shelter. HomeBASE allows families to transition away from and out of shelter by providing resources as a pathway to stable housing. HomeBASE is a program of the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC, previously the Department of Housing and Community Development), funded via line item 7004-0108.

HomeBASE currently is not codified in state statute, leaving it vulnerable to yearly budget whims. The structure of HomeBASE makes it difficult for families to use HomeBASE benefits to maintain an existing housing unit, even though evictions and shelter stays are more costly emotionally, physically, socially, and economically than HomeBASE benefits. This bill would broaden HomeBASE eligibility to allow upstream access to families

without requiring them to have been evicted from their current housing or to prove that they already are experiencing homelessness due to domestic violence; fire, flood, or natural disaster; a no-fault/excused fault eviction; or severe health and safety risk to their child.

Legislative sponsors/cosponsors of the HomeBASE bill: As of August 21st, the bill has been sponsored or cosponsored by Representatives Barber (**sponsor**), Cahill, Garry, Higgins, Holmes, Howard, LeBoeuf, Montañó, O’Day, Sabadosa, Tyler, and Vitolo, and Senators Miranda (**sponsor**), DiDomenico, Eldridge, Jehlen, Moore, Moran, Rausch, and Tarr.

46 statewide organizational endorsers of the HomeBASE bill: As of August 21st, the bill has been endorsed by organizations across the Commonwealth, including Abby’s House, Alliance of Cambridge Tenants (ACT), Allston Brighton Health Collaborative, Arise for Social Justice, Berkshire Housing, Brazilian Women's Group, Catholic Charities Worcester County, Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance, Central West Justice Center, Children’s HealthWatch, Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc., Disability Law Center, Dismas House, DOVE (Domestic Violence Ended), Inc., Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath), Elizabeth Freeman Center, Inc., Essex County Community Organization, Family Promise North Shore Boston, Friends of Boston’s Homeless, Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), Grow Food Northampton, Homes for Families, Housing Families Inc., Housing Greenfield, Justice 4 Housing, Lazarus House Inc., LEO, Inc., Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Mass Senior Action Council, MLPB, My Life My Choice, Northeast Justice Center, One Family, Rosie’s Place, Opportunity Communities, LLC, Safe Passage, SeniorCare Inc., Somerville Community Corporation, South Shore Resource and Advocacy Center, St. Clare of Assisi, Sweet Scents, Temple Sinai of Sharon, Inc., The Center for Teen Empowerment, and Western MA Network to End Homelessness.

Bill status: The bills were assigned to the Joint Committee on Housing on February 16, 2023. The bills were heard by the Committee on June 26, 2023. Two extension orders were adopted in February 2024 and April 2024, extending the deadline until July 31, 2024. On August 8, 2024, both bills were reported out favorably by the Joint Committee on Housing. House Bill 1297 was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means, and Senate Bill 890 was referred to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.

Please cosponsor and actively support House Bill 1297 and Senate Bill 890 to permanently establish and improve the HomeBASE Family Rehousing Program!

For more information, please contact Kelly Turley at the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless: kelly@mahomeless.org or 781-595-7570 x17.

-Last updated August 21, 2024