

Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless

**Legislative Action Day
Pre-Event Training Session**
April 1, 2025



Agenda

1. Overview of training
2. Legislative Action Day: What to expect
3. Helpful tips for meeting with legislators
4. Review of key bill & budget priorities
5. Q&A





MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR
THE HOMELESS



LEGISLATIVE ACTION DAY

A DAY OF COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY

HEAR FROM PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE, ADVOCATES, AND STATE
LEGISLATORS

LEARN ABOUT KEY BUDGET AND BILL PRIORITIES ON HOUSING,
HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION, AND CASH ASSISTANCE

ADVOCATE WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

MONDAY,
APRIL
7
10 AM



MASSACHUSETTS STATE HOUSE, BOSTON

SCAN ME



Helpful Tips

Before Meeting

Know who
represents you

Learn their
priorities

Prepare your
“ask”

During Meeting

Start with your
story

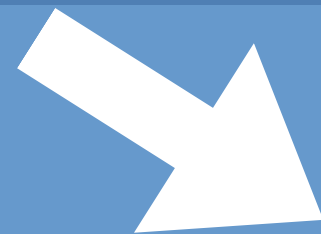
Be clear and
concise

Leave something
behind

After Meeting

Send a thank you

Follow up with
updates



www.wheredoivotema.com

malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator

Key Priorities



Everybody Needs ID

Ease access to standard Massachusetts ID cards for people experiencing homelessness



HomeBASE

Financial assistance to families eligible for Emergency Assistance,



Emergency Assistance (EA)

Immediate shelter and support to families facing homelessness



RAFT

Financial aid to low-income households facing housing crises, assisting with rent, mortgage, utilities, and other housing-related expenses.

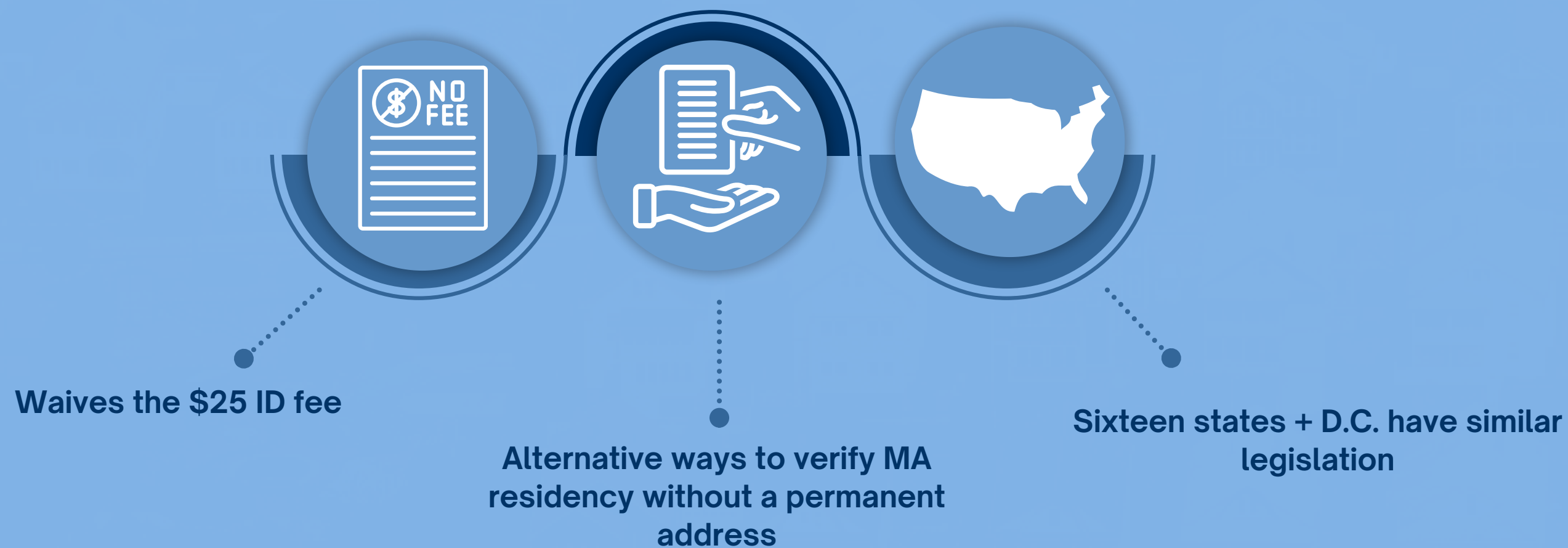


Bridge Subsidies for Older Adults

Expand access to bridge subsidies for older adults across the Commonwealth who are experiencing housing instability

Everyone Needs ID: Mass ID Access

Waive the fee for standard Massachusetts identification cards for youth and adults experiencing homelessness, removing barriers to essential services and opportunities.



Everyone Needs ID: Mass ID Access

Bill Campaign

An Act to provide identification to youth and adults experiencing homelessness (House Bill 3750/Senate Bill 2399)

This bill would:

- Establish a fee waiver process for youth and adults experiencing homelessness seeking standard Mass IDs
- Create a process for individuals experiencing homelessness to apply for standard Mass IDs if they cannot meet the existing criteria by allowing ID applicants who are experiencing homelessness to submit residency documentation from providers of homelessness and/or youth services and state agencies under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)

Budget Campaign

Language in an Outside Section and funding within the Massachusetts Transportation Trust Fund to provide free Mass IDs to people experiencing homelessness (Relevant Outside Section and 1595-6368)

- **Funding:** \$75,000
- **Language:** Include language in the Massachusetts Transportation Trust Fund line item and an outside section to provide free Mass IDs to people experiencing homelessness"



HomeBASE

HomeBASE offers financial assistance to families eligible for Emergency Assistance, helping them secure and sustain housing before or after exiting shelter.



HomeBASE

Bill Campaign

An Act promoting housing stability for families by strengthening the HomeBASE program
(House Bill 1469/Senate Bill 1011)

This bill would:

- Put the HomeBASE program into state statute
- Direct the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to provide renewals of HomeBASE rental assistance to families and children who otherwise would be facing a return to homelessness
- Allow families to access HomeBASE upstream to maintain existing housing if they otherwise would be eligible for the Emergency Assistance family shelter program
- Increase the maximum benefit levels to \$50,000 over the first 24 months of the program and up to \$25,000 in subsequent years for families needing additional time in the program

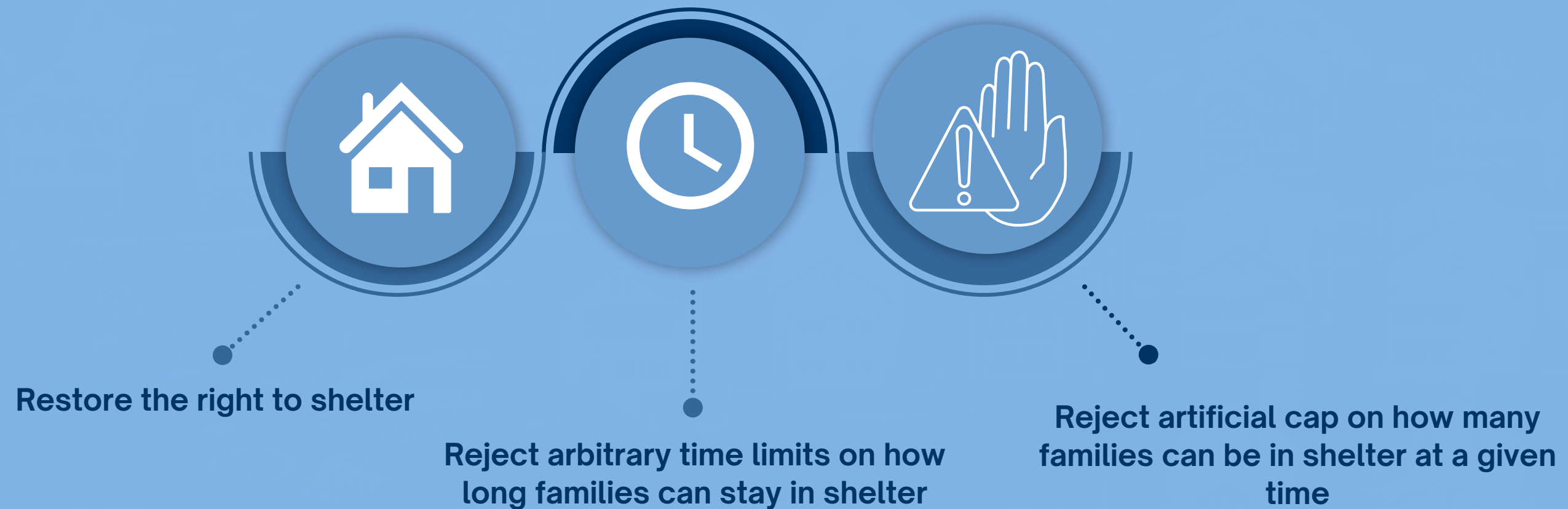
Budget Campaign

Line Item 7004-0108

- **Funding request:** \$80 million
- **Language requests:**
 - Increase the maximum benefit levels to \$50,000 over the first 24 months of the program and up to \$25,000 in subsequent years for families needing additional time
 - Allow families who otherwise would be eligible for Emergency Assistance to access HomeBASE "upstream"
 - Allow households to maximize resources from RAFT, HomeBASE, and other rental assistance programs
 - Allow families to maximize their incomes while enrolled in HomeBASE
 - Maintain FY25 language to require the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to provide the Legislature 90 days advance notice before reducing eligibility or benefits

Emergency Assistance (EA)

The EA program provides immediate shelter and support to children and families facing homelessness, aiming to help families transition into stable housing swiftly.



Emergency Assistance (EA)

Bill Campaign

An Act improving emergency housing assistance for children and families experiencing homelessness (House Bill 216/Senate Bill 136)

This bill would:

- Allow families who appear to be imminently at risk of homelessness to gain admission into EA shelter
- Prohibit the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) from turning families away due to lack of documentation
- Mandate EOHLC to look in existing state benefits databases to obtain requested documentation instead of delaying applications by requiring families to provide such documentation directly
- Require EOHLC to provide 90 days' notice to the Legislature, program participants, and the public before negatively altering program benefits or eligibility
- Officially establish an independent ombudsperson unit located within EOHLC to mediate between EA and HomeBASE applicants/participants and EOHLC

Budget Campaign

Line Item 7004-0101

- **Funding request:** Adequate funding to support children and families experiencing homelessness
- **Language requests:**
 - Remove the length of stay limits
 - Eliminate the “dual track” system, which kicks some families out of rapid track shelters in as little as 30 business days
 - Remove the cap on the number of families in EA shelter (currently 5,800 families)
 - Restore presumptive eligibility, which gives families temporary access to shelter while they prove ongoing eligibility
 - Strengthen support for families leaving shelter, including by improving housing search, providing ongoing wraparound supports, and increasing HomeBASE rehousing resources

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)

RAFT provides financial aid to low-income households facing housing crises, assisting with rent, mortgage, utilities, and other housing-related expenses.



Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)

Bill Campaign

An Act providing upstream homelessness prevention assistance to families, youth, and adults
(House Bill 1488/Senate Bill 961)

This bill would:

- Put RAFT into state statute
- Ensure that benefits are available to families and individuals earlier in a housing or utility crisis ("upstream", before a household has received a notice to quit or utility shut-off notice)
- Allow households to receive up to twelve months of assistance, without arbitrary dollar caps. (The current cap is \$7,000/family/year, regardless of household size or rent burden.)
- Streamline access
- Improve cross-agency collaboration and transparency

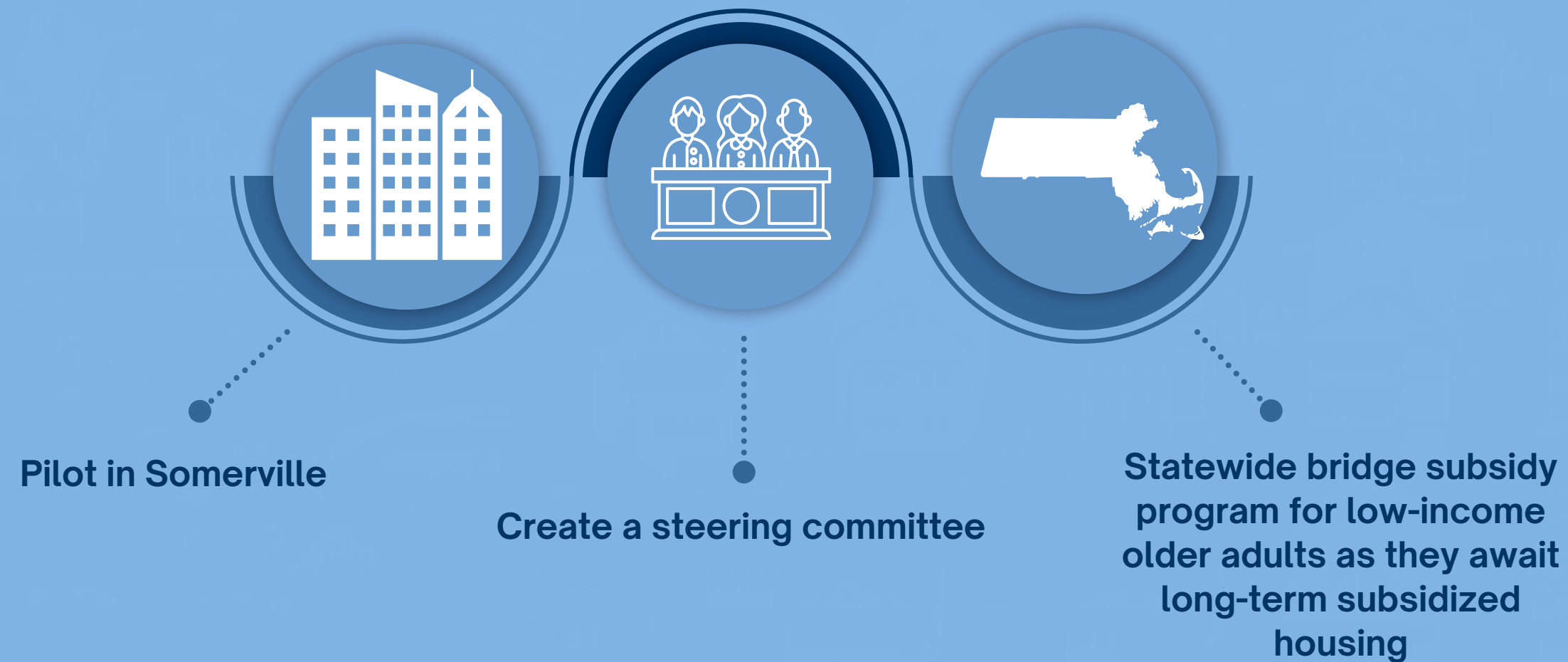
Budget Campaign

Line Item 7004-9316

- **Funding request:** \$300 million, up from the current FY25 funding level of \$204.7 million
- **Language requests:**
 - Increase the RAFT benefit cap of \$7,000/household/year to \$10,000/household/year
 - Ensure upstream access to benefits
 - Allow households to maximize resources from RAFT, HomeBASE, and other rental assistance programs
 - Increase RAFT flexibility to incorporate more components of the former federally funded Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), including direct payments to tenants whose landlords are unresponsive or who refuse payments
 - Maintain and expand quarterly tracking and reporting requirements

Bridge Subsidies for Older Adults

Expand access to bridge subsidies for older adults across the Commonwealth who are experiencing housing instability



Bridge Subsidies for Older Adults

Bill Campaign

An Act promoting housing stability for older adults
across the Commonwealth
(House Docket 359/Senate Bill 475)

This bill would:

- Expand the bridge subsidy program for low-income older adults, aged 60 years and older, facing housing instability. A version of the program currently is funded as a pilot in the City of Somerville. The program would allow eligible older adults to remain in place while they await approval for long-term subsidized housing through programs such as the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) and state-funded public housing
- Create a steering committee to help guide the expansion of the bridge subsidy program. The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities would lead the steering committee, which would include key stakeholders such as older adults with lived experience of housing instability, providers, advocates, legislators, and a representative from the Executive Office of Aging and Independence.

Budget Campaign

Bridge subsidies to promote housing stability for
older adults (New Line Item)

Funding: \$10 million

Language: Budget language to create bridge subsidies for up to 1,000 older adults facing housing instability to allow them to remain in place while they await approval for public housing or a subsidy through programs such as the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program. Low-income older adults participating in the bridge subsidy program would pay 30% of their income towards rent, with the bridge subsidy making up the difference in the total rent, up to 110% of the fair market rent. The bridge subsidy program would be administered by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), in collaboration with the Executive Office of Aging and Independence.



Additional Key Bill and Budget Priorities

See <https://www.mahomeless.org/current-bill-and-budget-priorities>

- Bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness
- Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children program (EAEDC)
- Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)
- Rent Stabilization
- Access to Counsel





THANK YOU

For joining this presentation
**Massachusetts Coalition for the
Homeless**



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