



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

# LEGISLATIVE ACTION DAY



Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home.

## Legislative Action Day 2024 Training Call Agenda

February 28, 2024

- **Welcome**
- **Overview of our Legislative Action Day agenda for Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup>**
- **Helpful hints about meeting with legislators and their aides**
  - Setting up meetings
  - Tips for meetings
- **Review of key budget priorities:**
  - Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter:
    - Adequate funding, estimated to be \$900 million+
    - Upholding the right to shelter and positive language changes
  - Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT):
    - \$300 million
    - Increasing access to and funding for homelessness prevention resources, prohibiting the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC, formerly DHCD) from requiring renters to have a notice to quit from their landlord before being approved for back rent assistance, providing upstream access to benefits, increasing the RAFT benefit cap beyond the current cap of \$7,000/household/year, etc.
  - HomeBASE:
    - \$80 million
    - Allowing families who otherwise would be eligible for Emergency Assistance to access HomeBASE "upstream", so that more families can maintain their existing apartments, allowing households to maximize resources from RAFT, HomeBASE, and other rental assistance programs; continuing to allow eligible families to receive at least two years of HomeBASE benefits, with opportunities for families to further extend HomeBASE in twelve-month increments to avoid a return to homelessness; continuing to provide families with at least \$30,000 over two years plus \$15,000 for each subsequent year, with additional flexibility for the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to address the needs of larger families, families in higher cost areas, and other families with extenuating circumstances, etc.
  - Youth homelessness:
    - \$15 million
    - Maximizing housing and services for unaccompanied youth and young adults
  - Rental bridge subsidies for older adults:
    - \$60 million
    - Creating bridge subsidies for up to 6,000 older adults age 60+ 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, Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, and public housing programs
  - Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP):
    - \$300 million

- Creating more housing subsidies under the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program as well as under the Alternative Housing Voucher Program
- Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children program (EAEDC) and Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (TAFDC):
  - Strengthening the EAEDC and TAFDC cash assistance programs for elders, people with disabilities, and families with children by providing 20% grant increases to participants
- **Review of key bill priorities:**
  - Mass ID access:
    - Easing access to Mass ID cards for people experiencing homelessness
  - RAFT:
    - Increasing access to homelessness prevention resources through the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition program
    - Putting the program into state statute
  - EA:
    - Increasing access to the Emergency Assistance family shelter program
    - Eliminating the EA asset limit
  - Bill of rights:
    - Establishing a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness
  - HomeBASE:
    - Allowing otherwise eligible families to access HomeBASE upstream
    - Codifying language similar to FY24 budget language to allow eligible families to renew benefits beyond the initial 24-month period and to receive \$30,000 over the first 24 months and \$15,000 in subsequent year (or a higher amount as set in the line item)
    - Putting the program into state statute
  - EAEDC:
    - Increasing monthly grant levels
    - Providing an annual cost of living adjustment for older adults and people with disabilities who are participating in the program
    - Putting the removal of the EAEDC homelessness penalty into statute
  - Access to counsel:
    - Providing full legal representation to low-income tenants and certain low-income owner occupants in eviction proceedings
  - MRVP:
    - Making improvements to the program
    - Putting the program into state statute
  - Rent stabilization:
    - Removing the statewide ban on rent control and establishing a local option for cities and towns to regulate rents
  - Housing Bond Bill (Affordable Homes Act) and more
- **Question and Answer session**

