



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home



**Take Action to Improve the Emergency Assistance Program:
Please cosponsor and actively support An Act improving emergency housing assistance for
children and families experiencing homelessness**

[House Docket 3095](#) and [Senate Docket 2155](#)

**Sponsored by Representative Marjorie Decker, Representative Liz Miranda, and
Senator Adam Gomez**

What is happening to families seeking Emergency Assistance shelter?

Families with children face many barriers in securing Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter placements and related HomeBASE rehousing resources from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), including difficulty accessing the application, requirements that they provide verifications multiple times, and rules that force families to stay in unsafe places before being deemed "homeless enough" to qualify. Additionally, families are disempowered and often do not have an advocate to help them navigate the process. This results in far fewer families approved for shelter and HomeBASE benefits than are eligible, and scores of children and families exposed to the trauma of unstably sheltered homelessness.

Why do we need omnibus Emergency Assistance legislation?

This legislation would build upon, and enshrine in statute, protections the Legislature has repeatedly passed in the budget process that do away with barriers to access and that strengthen reporting requirements. It also would create an ombudsperson office within the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) to provide families with systemic support and oversight over the day-to-day administration of the EA shelter and related HomeBASE programs. **Families deserve a right to shelter with dignity and stability.**

What would these bills do?

- Families in immediate need of shelter would be offered shelter placements the same day they apply, if they appear to be eligible.
- The Department of Transitional Assistance and DHCD would share information to reduce barriers to entry by streamlining the verification process.
- During the current and any future states of emergency, DHCD would suspend shelter terminations, and allow families that are otherwise eligible to access EA again even if they had been in shelter in the past year.
- An ombudsperson unit within EOHED would respond to and resolve problems experienced by families applying for and participating in EA and HomeBASE, and report systemic problems to the Legislature.

Who has cosponsored these bills?

As of March 29th, Representatives Decker (sponsor), Miranda (sponsor), Barber, Campbell, Capano, Devers, Domb, Galvin, González, Higgins, Honan, Howard, Minicucci, Nguyen, Owens, D. Rogers, Sabadosa,

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Santiago, Ultrino, Uytterhoeven, and Williams and Senators Gonzalez (sponsor), Comerford, Hinds, and Lesser have sponsored or cosponsored these bills.

Which organizations have endorsed these bills?

As of March 29th, the bills have been endorsed by Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation, Allston Brighton Health Collaborative, Arise for Social Justice, Brazilian Women's Group, Central West Justice Center, Charlesview, Inc., Greater Boston Legal Services, Homes for Families, Lynn Community Health Center, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Northeast Justice Center, Rosie's Place, and Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness.

Please cosponsor and actively support [House Docket 3095](#) and [Senate Docket 2155](#) today!

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

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