



**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 Bill 202](#) and [Senate Bill 111](#)**

**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 often are disempowered and 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 or unsheltered 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 strengthen reporting requirements. It also would build upon FY22 budget language to create an ombudsperson office within the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) to provide families with systemic support in accessing and retaining shelter and related HomeBASE program benefits. **Massachusetts families deserve a right to shelter with dignity and stability.**

### **What would this bill do?**

- Families in immediate need of shelter would be offered shelter placements the same day they apply if they appear to be eligible.
- DHCD and the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) would share information to reduce barriers to entry by streamlining the verification process.
- During states of emergency, like the recent COVID-19 state 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 the bill?**

As of October 13<sup>th</sup>, Representatives Decker (sponsor), Miranda (sponsor), Barber, Campbell, Capano,

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Connolly, Devers, Doherty, Domb, Donato, Duffy, Galvin, González, Higgins, Honan, Howard, Lewis, Madaro, Minicucci, Nguyen, Owens, D. Rogers, Sabadosa, Santiago, Sena, Ultrino, Uytterhoeven, Vargas, Whipps, and Williams and Senators Gomez (sponsor), Comerford, DiDomenico, Eldridge, Feeney, Hinds, Kennedy, Lesser, O'Connor, and Velis have sponsored or cosponsored these bills.

### **Which organizations have endorsed this bill?**

As of October 13<sup>th</sup>, the bills have been endorsed by Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation, Allston Brighton Health Collaborative, Arise for Social Justice, Boston Children's Hospital, 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, One Family, Inc., Rosie's Place, and Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness.

### **What is the status of the bill?**

The bill will be heard by the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities on October 15, 2021.

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

*-Last updated October 13, 2021*