



Please Actively Support Key Homelessness, Housing, and Benefits Bills in the Remaining Months of the 2021-2022 Legislative Session

Top Bill Priority Campaigns

- Ease access to standard Massachusetts ID cards for people experiencing homelessness by eliminating the \$25 fee and allowing alternative ways to verify Massachusetts residency without requiring a permanent address

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Kay Khan, Representative Jim O'Day, and Senator Harriette Chandler
- **Bill Name:** An Act to provide identification to youth and adults experiencing homelessness
- **Bill Numbers:** House Bill 3515/Senate Bill 2612 (formerly Senate Bill 2276)
- This bill would ease access to standard Mass IDs for people experiencing homelessness. These IDs would not be REAL ID Act-compliant Mass IDs, for which residents must provide additional verifications that meet federal standards. The Senate version of the bill passed the Senate unanimously (39-0) on January 13, 2022, and is awaiting action in the House.

- Prevent evictions and foreclosures during the COVID-19 state of emergency and recovery

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Frank Moran, Representative Kevin Honan, and Senator Pat Jehlen
- **Bill Name:** An Act to prevent COVID-19 evictions and foreclosures and promote an equitable housing recovery
- **Bill Numbers:** House Bill 1434/Senate Bill 891
- This bill would protect public health, prevent displacement, and address the serious financial distress resulting from the COVID-19 emergency by requiring parties to first seek rental assistance before filing an eviction case; protecting the most vulnerable tenants from forcible eviction for COVID-19 related debt; pausing no-fault or no cause evictions during the state of emergency and recovery period; reinstating a pause on foreclosures and instituting forbearance requirements mirroring federal policies; and requiring the state to adopt equitable principles, flexibility, and simplification in the distribution of rental assistance funds.

- Permanently establish and improve the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) homelessness prevention program

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Marjorie Decker and Representative Liz Miranda
- **Bill Name:** An Act providing upstream homelessness prevention assistance to families, youth, and adults
- **Bill Number:** House Bill 1385
- This bill would put the RAFT homelessness prevention program into state statute, and ensure that benefits are available to households earlier in a housing or utility crisis. The bill also would streamline access, improve cross-agency collaboration, and allow households to access the resources needed to clear arrearages without arbitrary caps. Passage of the bill would allow the state to further build upon lessons learned from RAFT and the companion Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) during the COVID era.

- Omnibus bill to ease access to the Emergency Assistance program (EA) and to create an ombudsperson unit to assist families applying for and participating in EA and HomeBASE

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Marjorie Decker, Representative Liz Miranda, and Senator Adam Gomez
- **Bill Name:** An Act improving emergency housing assistance for children and families experiencing homelessness
- **Bill Numbers:** House Bill 202/Senate Bill 111
- This omnibus legislation would address access and administrative issues for families and children seeking to access or retain Emergency Assistance shelter and HomeBASE rehousing benefits. It would allow

families that appear to be imminently at risk of homelessness to gain admission into EA shelter. It also would prohibit the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) from turning families away due to lack of documentation and mandate that DHCD look in existing state benefits databases to obtain requested documentation instead of delaying applications by requiring families to provide such documentation directly. The bill also would establish an independent ombudsperson unit located in the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development to mediate between EA and HomeBASE participants/applicants and DHCD, building upon FY22 budget language.

- Establish a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Smitty Pignatelli, Representative Frank Moran, and Senator Becca Rausch
- **Bill Name:** An Act providing a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness
- **Bill Numbers:** House Bill 264/Senate Bill 142
- This bill would recognize and affirm various rights of people experiencing homelessness, such as the right to move freely in public spaces, the right to confidentiality of records, the right to privacy of property, and the right to register to vote and to vote. The bill would provide additional civil rights protections for people experiencing homelessness. The bill would affirm the right to rest, eat, pray, and be in public spaces by amending the Commonwealth's public spaces laws, amend the Commonwealth's voting laws to affirm the right to vote and register to vote without a permanent address, amend the Commonwealth's anti-discrimination laws to include housing status, and repeal archaic sections of Massachusetts General Laws regarding so-called "tramps", "vagrants", and "vagabonds". The bill would give the Superior Court jurisdiction to enforce the rights included in the legislation.

- Improve the Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children program (EAEDC)

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Jim O'Day and Senator Pat Jehlen
- **Bill Name:** An Act relative to assisting elders and people with disabilities in the Commonwealth
- **Bill Numbers:** House Bill 750/Senate Bill 411
- This bill would improve the Department of Transitional Assistance's (DTA) EAEDC program by putting the removal of the EAEDC homelessness penalty into statute; increasing monthly grant levels; and providing an annual cost of living adjustment. As currently written, the bill also would increase the program's asset limit from \$250 to \$2,500 for households of one and to \$5,000 for households of two or more. The Legislature eliminated the EAEDC asset limits, however, in the FY22 budget, so we are looking to redraft this section to put the current practice into statute.

See our full list of bill priorities with links to the legislative language here: <http://tinyurl.com/mchbills2122>

Please actively support these critical homelessness, housing, and benefits bills today!

Thank you for your support and collaboration to address and end homelessness for families, individuals, and youth across the Commonwealth.

For more information, please contact the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless:
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