



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

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

June 13, 2022

Chairperson Michael Rodrigues
Vice Chairperson Cindy Friedman
Ranking Minority Member Patrick O'Connor

Chairperson Aaron Michlewitz
Vice Chairperson Ann-Margaret Ferrante
Ranking Minority Member Todd Smola

Re: Please take action to develop the strongest possible FY23 budget on homelessness, housing, and benefits issues

Dear Esteemed Members of the FY23 Budget Conference Committee:

We respectfully ask you to please join the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless in supporting the strongest possible FY23 budget that centers the needs of people experiencing homelessness, housing instability, and poverty as we continue to address COVID-19 and move forward with an equitable recovery. With your leadership, the FY23 budget can be a vehicle to take concrete, positive action to promote stability, equity, dignity, and hope.

Please do all you can to make sure that the final budget incorporates key language and maximum funding.

- **Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (line item 7004-9316):**
 - **Funding request:** At least match the higher Senate funding level of \$150,000,000 in direct appropriations
 - **Language requests:** Senate language to explicitly restore the RAFT benefit cap to \$10,000/household for FY23 and to simplify income verification for MassHealth and Department of Transitional Assistance program participants plus House language to expand categories of households eligible for RAFT with incomes above 50% area median income (AMI) but below 60% AMI. We also are asking the Conference Committee to protect upstream access to RAFT by prohibiting the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) from requiring a notice to quit, summary process summons and complaint, and/or utility shut-off notice to access RAFT. While this upstream language was not in the House or Senate proposals, we are asking the Conference Committee to take swift action given DHCD's recent indication that they plan to require families and individuals to have one of those documents to access resources for back rent and back utilities in FY23.
- **Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter and services (line item 7004-0101):**
 - **Funding request:** Higher House funding level of \$218,641,057
 - **Language requests:** More detailed Senate tracking and reporting language plus related Senate language from Outside Section 4 on public posting of reports
- **Housing and Services for Unaccompanied Youth and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness (line item 4000-0007):**
 - **Funding request:** Higher Senate funding level of \$9,500,000
- **Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (line item 7004-9024):**

- **Funding request:** Higher Senate funding level of \$154,300,000
- **Language requests:** Senate language on counting tenants' utility payments in the calculation of their rent share, to be capped at 30% of income, instead of the current general standard of 40% of income for rent
- **HomeBASE (line item 7004-0108):**
 - **Funding request:** Higher House funding level of \$59,411,201
 - **Language requests:** Senate language to lift the income eligibility limit for families once they enroll in HomeBASE to allow families to maximize their income plus related Senate language from Outside Section 4 on public posting of reports. We are grateful that the House, Senate, and Governor all recommended making HomeBASE a two-year program instead of a one-year program.
- **Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children Program (line item 4408-1000):**
 - **Funding request:** Higher Senate funding level of \$140,645,184
 - **Language request:** Senate language to increase monthly grants by 10%. We encourage the Conference Committee to modify the language to implement the grant increase earlier in the fiscal year, instead of April 2023.
- **Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Grant Payments (TAFDC, line item 4403-2000):**
 - **Funding request:** Higher Senate funding level of \$356,630,717
 - **Language request:** Senate language to increase monthly grants by 10%. We encourage the Conference Committee to modify the language to implement the grant increase earlier in the fiscal year, instead of April 2023.
- **Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP, line item 7004-9030):**
 - **Funding request:** \$13,685,355 in direct appropriations as recommended by both the House and Senate, with language to carry over unspent FY22 fund, with anticipated combined funding of approximately \$19,300,000
- **Subsidies to Public Housing Authorities (line item 7004-9005):**
 - **Funding request:** \$92,000,000 as recommended by both the House and Senate
- **Shelter and Services for Adults Experiencing Homelessness (line item 7004-0102):**
 - **Funding request:** Higher House funding level of \$100,000,000
- **Home and Healthy for Good Program (line item 7004-0104):**
 - **Funding request:** Higher House funding level of \$6,390,000
- **Transportation for Students Experiencing Homelessness (line item 7035-0008):**
 - **Funding request:** Higher House funding level of \$22,981,479
- **Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Administrative Account (line item 7004-0099):**
 - **Language requests:** The Senate's more detailed version of language on data collection related to access to Emergency Assistance (EA) applications, as well as related Senate language from Outside Section 4 on public posting of reports
- **Eviction Protections:**
 - **Language request:** Senate language from Outside Section 161 on "Study on No-Fault Evictions"
- **Common application for benefits and housing resources:**

- **Language request:** Language to create a common application for programs such as MassHealth, TAFDC, EAEDC, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and resources such as housing subsidies, shelter, childcare subsidies, and fuel assistance, as recommended by both the House and Senate

Our full list of recommendations is here: <https://tinyurl.com/mchFY23>. Your active support for these investments and initiatives will be critical in the days and weeks ahead as you finalize the budget. Thank you for your time, consideration, and leadership. We appreciate your work to address widespread inequities and to ensure that everyone has a place to call home.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

With gratitude and hope,



Kelly Turley
Associate Director
kelly@mahomeless.org
781-595-7570 x17

cc: Senate President Karen Spilka and Speaker Ronald Mariano