



October 30, 2023

The Honorable Senate President Karen Spilka
Office of the Senate President
State House, Room 332
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Speaker Ronald Mariano
Office of the Speaker of the House
State House, Room 356
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Please Fund Emergency Assistance Family Shelter; Don't Leave Kids Out in the Cold

Dear Senate President Spilka, Speaker Mariano, and members of the Legislature:

Thank you for your longstanding strong support of children and families in the Commonwealth. We are grateful for your commitment to meeting residents' basic needs, and especially the needs of the most vulnerable members of our communities.

We write to ask you to urgently provide enough supplemental funding for the Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter program to enable it to continue to serve all eligible families who are experiencing homelessness at least through January. This would give state leaders time to carefully consider policy solutions to the surge in demand for family shelter. It would also be consistent with the 90-days advance notice that the line item, 7004-0101, requires before eligibility changes are made. Such notice has not yet been provided by the Administration to the Legislature.

There is no greater basic need than shelter from the elements, which is why we are so proud to live in a state that guarantees a right to shelter to eligible children in need. We are keenly aware that the EA system is under great strain at the moment, and you and the Administration are working to develop solutions. In the meantime, however, we are deeply, deeply troubled by the notion that the state may shut shelter doors to new applicants and place eligible families on a waiting list starting this week, on November 1st.

We have seen what happens when families cannot access shelter. Toddlers huddle with their parents on the street. Children are forced to sleep in cars in the bitter cold. Parents and guardians attempt to protect themselves and their small loved ones from inclement weather and physical danger in places not meant for human habitation.

Please appropriate the necessary funds to sustain our shelter system through January, at a minimum, as an interim measure while working to develop a more comprehensive, family-focused response that could be enacted when the Legislature returns from its winter recess.

For questions or more information, contact Kelly Turley, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless (kelly@mahomeless.org) or Andrea Park, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (apark@mlri.org).

Sincerely,

Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless,
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute,
and more than 100 undersigned organizations

A Better Cambridge
ACLU of Massachusetts
Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs
Arise For Social Justice
Bedford Public Schools
Berkshire Immigrant Center
Berkshire Interfaith Organizing
BMBCC, INC- Boston Missionary Baptist
Community Center, INC
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC)
Boston Children's Hospital
Boston Public Health Commission
Brazilian Women's Group
Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee
(CEOC)
Cambridge Health Alliance
Casa Myrna Vazquez
Catholic Charities Worcester County
Central Berkshire Habitat for Humanity
Central West Justice Center
Chelsea Disability Commission
Citizen, justice united
Cognitive Holistic Healing
Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc.
Community Day Center of Waltham
Community Resource Initiative (CRI)
Compassion Works Inc
Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals
Disability Law Center
DOVE (Domestic Violence Ended), Inc.
Elizabeth Freeman Center, Inc.
Empath, Inc
Empowered and Dedicated to Edify the
Nation, Inc (EDEN)
English for New Bostonians
Fall River WIC
Falmouth Jewish Congregation
FamilyAid
Fenway Health
Greater Boston Legal Services
Hilltown Safety At Home
HomeStart, Inc.
Horizons for Homeless Children
Housing Families Inc
Housing Greenfield
Housing Justice for Survivors Project, Legal
Services Center of Harvard Law School
International Institute of New England

Jane Doe Inc. - MA Coalition Against Sexual
Assault and Domestic Violence
Jewish Community Relations Council of
Greater Boston
Jewish Family & Children's Service
Jewish Family Service of Metrowest
Latin Coalition of the Berkshires
Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School
Lowell Alliance
LUK, Inc.
Massachusetts Action for Justice
Massachusetts Advocates for Children
Massachusetts Association of Behavioral
Health Systems
Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center
(MassBudget)
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
Massachusetts Fair Housing Center
Massachusetts Head Start Association
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee
Advocacy Coalition
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Massachusetts Medical Society
Massachusetts Public Health Association
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of
Cruelty to Children
Material Aid & Advocacy Program
Mental Health Association (MHA)
Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee
Middlesex Human Services
MLPB
National Association of Social Workers, MA
Chapter
North Brookfield Care 2 Help
Northeast Justice Center
One Family
Pathway for Immigrant Workers
Phoenix Charter Academy
Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity
Progressive Massachusetts
Project Bread-The Walk for Hunger
Public Health Institute of Western
Massachusetts
RCAP Solutions, Inc.
REACH Beyond Domestic Violence
Reproductive Equity Now
Roots and Dreams and Mustard Seeds
Rosie's Place

Roxbury Youthworks, Inc.
Salasin Project
Shut Up Until You There
Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston
Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston
Solidarity Lowell
St Clare of Assisi
St. Stephen's Youth Programs
The Brick House Community Resource Center
The Children's League of Massachusetts
The Dimock Center
The Greater Boston Food Bank
The Marion Institute
The Neighborhood Developers
Unitarian Universalist Church of Pittsfield MA
United Way of Massachusetts Bay
UU Mass Action
Venezuelan Association of Massachusetts
Wellness for Our Future, LLC
Worcester Community Action Council
Worcester County Youth Action Board
YWCA Cambridge