

MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Rev. 2-18-10

Legislative Priorities FY 2011

Budget Priorities: Maintain Funding for Safety Net Programs

1. Adequately fund and protect key support programs for low-income families and individuals.

- Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC - Line Item 4403-2000): Fund at a minimum of \$319.1 million (Governor's FY'11 budget recommendation based on projected caseload).
- Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children Program (EAEDC - Line Item 4408-1000): Fund at minimum of \$88.8 million (Governor's FY'11 budget recommendation based on projected caseload).
- Restore Homeless Children's Access to Early Education and Care (Line Item 3000-4060): Level fund the account at \$262 million and include language in this line item to restore immediate access to childcare vouchers to homeless children living in shelters, a successful policy previously implemented by the Department of Early Education and Care in partnership with the Department of Transitional Assistance, which was suspended as of Sept. 1, 2009.



Homelessness
Prevention

2. Adequately fund emergency service programs for homeless families and individuals and support key line item provisions.

- Emergency Assistance Family Shelter and Services (EA - Line Item 7004-0101): Fund at a minimum of \$133.5 million (level funding at current FY'10 appropriation).
 - ✓ Include new line item language directing DHCD to provide diversion resources and services to families who meet the EA eligibility criteria and who otherwise would be in need of shelter within 30 days (but for such assistance from the EA program).
 - ✓ Include earmark language in this account authorizing DHCD to create a bridge subsidy program to help EA eligible families to avoid shelter or rapidly move out of shelter.
- Individual Homeless Assistance (Line Item 7004-0102): Fund at \$37.2 million (level funding at FY'10 expenditures from this account combined with FY'10 funding for the hopeFound program, which previously was contained in line item 4590-0915).



Housing

3. Protect access to and funding for housing programs serving extremely low-income households.

- Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP - Line item 7004-9024): Fund at a minimum of \$35.4 million to maintain existing services (Governor's FY'11 budget recommendation to maintain current program at existing levels).
- Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program (RAFT - Line Item 7004-9316): Fund at a minimum of \$2.5 million. (The Legislature initially funded RAFT at \$5 million in FY'10, but the Governor reduced this funding to \$160,000). While federal stimulus money is available to help some families to avoid homelessness, not all communities and at-risk households are covered by these funds.
- Public Housing Operating Subsidies - Funding and Language (Line Item 7004-9005): Fund state public housing operating subsidies at a minimum of \$66.5 million. Include new line item language to ensure that households who are at-risk of or experiencing homelessness maintain their access to "existing" priority statuses for long-term affordable housing, even if the household is receiving a temporary housing subsidy.



Direct Service

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Bills Improving Programs and Benefits for Low-Income Households

4. "An Act to Prevent Homelessness by Removing Barriers to Subsidized Housing" (House Bill 1242).

Filed by Representative Carl Sciortino, H. 1242 will complement ongoing efforts by the Commonwealth to prevent homelessness and reduce reliance on emergency shelter by removing unwarranted barriers to accessing permanently affordable, subsidized housing for those who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. Among other things, the bill would address the following barriers:

- **Credit barriers** – The bill would limit consideration of credit history where the applicant has a good record of paying rent and require consideration of mitigating circumstances.
- **Electronic payment opportunities and third party notification** – The bill would require subsidized housing providers to establish systems to enable tenants to have their rent electronically transferred from bank accounts to avoid non-payment situations and to allow tenants to designate a third party to receive notices concerning their tenancies.
- **Lack of affordable housing for homeless or at-risk households who are likely to be reliable tenants** – The bill would establish a statewide priority for state and federal public housing and other subsidized housing programs for certain persons who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. The bill would also ensure that persons receiving *temporary* housing subsidies will not lose priority for longer term housing subsidies, to enable them to leave or avoid emergency shelter.
- **Unreasonable reliance on past conduct** – The bill limits consideration of otherwise disqualifying conduct if the conduct did not occur within a reasonable period of time prior to admission.



**Everyone
deserves a
place to call
home**

5. No Place Like Home: "An Act to Prevent Homelessness Among Recipients of Transitional Assistance" (Senate Bill 43/House Bill 169).

Filed in the House by Representative Denise Provost and in the Senate by Senator Pat Jehlen, S. 43 /H. 169 would establish a housing stability screening program at the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and would improve income benefits to TAFDC and EAEDC recipients experiencing homelessness. The bill would:

- **Establish regular housing stability screenings** with participants in DTA cash and nutritional assistance programs to assess if these families and individuals are at risk of homelessness.
- **Provide stabilization funds and services** to link at-risk households to needed resources.
- **Increase income supports to TAFDC and EAEDC households** experiencing homelessness, establishing escrow accounts with the money currently being deducted from their monthly grants (\$148.50 for TAFDC recipients and \$211 for EAEDC recipients).

For More Information, Please Contact:
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