Dear Editor,

The number of people experiencing homelessness is continuing to rise. As of February 27, 2014, there were approximately 4,400 families with children and pregnant women in Massachusetts’ Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter program. 1,992 of these families with children were being sheltered in motels. This number does not count those families who are doubled up, living in unsafe conditions, or sleeping in their cars-- or many of the 5,400 families who have or will time out of the state's HomeBASE rental assistance program during fiscal year 2014.

In addition, 2011 data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), released in August 2012, estimates that 13,157 high school-aged students in public schools are experiencing homelessness on any given day in Massachusetts. This number includes an estimated 5,853 unaccompanied high school students and lack adequate services and housing.

In collaboration with the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, I ask for your strong support for the Coalition's priorities, which include:
- Passing House Bill 135, An Act providing housing and support services to unaccompanied homeless youth, which now is awaiting action in the House Ways and Means Committee. This bill, filed by Representative Jim O'Day, would create much-needed housing and services for youth and young adults under the age of 25 who are experiencing homelessness and out on their own.

- Ensuring that families experiencing homelessness no longer have to stay in places not meant for human habitation before accessing Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter and services by amending the EA line item and by reinstating the Seven Day Temporary Emergency Accommodations Program

- Providing $87.5 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program to allow 2,000 or more new households access permanent, affordable housing

In Massachusetts 19,029 people are counted as experiencing homelessness. Between 2013-3013, we saw the 5th highest increase in homelessness among all states. These are families, children and young adults who are now homeless for a multitude of reasons. Why can we not aid them and ask our legislators to support them?

I urge you all to write to our State Representatives and Senators, and tell them that this needs addressing now, not some time later, for all homeless children, families and young adults in Massachusetts. For more information please visit www.mahomeless.org

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME