



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

June 28, 2012

Preliminary Analysis of Housing and Homelessness Issues in the Conference Committee Budget and Advocacy Next Steps

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Dear friend,

Late last night, the Conference Committee on the FY'13 budget released its recommendations. Today, the House and Senate likely will vote on this compromise budget. The budget then will be sent to Governor Patrick for him to sign or issue vetoes.

Please see below for preliminary analysis of what is in the Conference Committee budget, and our advocacy call for you to weigh in with Governor Patrick now. To see the committee's complete recommendations, [click here](#).

Thank you!

-Kelly Turley
Director of Legislative Advocacy
kelly@mahomeless.org
781-595-7570 x17

FY'13 Budget Conference Committee* Decisions on Housing and Homelessness Issues

*The FY'13 Conference Committee budget was developed by a six-member committee, which included Representatives Brian S. Dempsey (D-Haverhill), Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington), and Viriato Manuel deMacedo (R-Plymouth) and Senators Stephen M. Brewer (D-Barre), Jennifer L. Flanagan (D-Leominster), and Michael R. Knapik (R-Westfield).

Conference Committee Outcomes for Selected Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Line Items

1.) Emergency Assistance (EA shelter and services line item 7004-0101 and EA motel line item 7004-0103).

Conference Committee Outcome: The Conference Committee adopted compromise language for the EA line item, which is closer to the Senate version. For funding, the Conference Committee adopted the lower Senate amount of \$96.7 million, while using the House approach of splitting the funding into two accounts, one for traditional shelters and services (\$80 million) and one for motels (\$16.6 million).

The budget language changes the current eligibility standards dramatically. The language only requires DHCD to provide shelter to certain families who:

- Are at risk of domestic violence in their current housing situation or are experiencing homelessness because they fled a domestic violence situation
- Lost their housing due to fire, flood, or natural disaster
- "... through no fault of their own, have been subject to eviction from their most recent housing due to: (a) foreclosure; (b) condemnation; (c) conduct by a guest or former household member who is not part of the household seeking emergency shelter and over whose conduct the remaining household members had no control; or (d) nonpayment of rent caused by a documented medical condition or diagnosed disability or caused by a documented loss of income within the last 12 months directly as a result of a change in household composition or a loss of income source through no fault of the family"
- Are not primary lease holders and are living in situations such as double-up situations or in places not meant for human habitation (such as cars, emergency rooms, campgrounds, and unfinished basements) and where there is a "substantial health and safety risk that is likely to result in a significant harm" if the families continue to stay there

While additional families may be eligible at the Administration's discretion, we anticipate that the forthcoming EA regulation changes will limit access to only families in these categories. **The Coalition is very concerned that this language will be implemented in a way that will lead to thousands of additional families being left without shelter.**

The committee did not include the House's arbitrary 9-month time limit on access to shelter, but did adopt Senate language that prohibits families in shelter for more than 32 weeks from accessing HomeBASE funds to assist in their move to new housing.

The committee did include critical language that requires the Administration to give 60-days advanced notice before making eligibility restrictions or benefits reductions. In addition, the committee adopted expanded tracking and reporting language, including language that requires DHCD to report on any savings realized by implementing eligibility restrictions and benefit reductions in FY'13.

Stay tuned for further details, analysis, and advocacy steps, as the

EA landscape changes.

FY'13 Conference Committee funding level: \$96.7 million, with just over \$80 million in line item 7004-0101 and \$16.6 million in line item 7004-0103

FY'12 funding level: Currently, \$137.5 million (including the latest [supplemental appropriation](#))

FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$100.4 million

FY'13 House funding level: \$105.5 million (combination of line items 7004-0101 and 7004-0103)

FY'13 Senate funding level: \$96.7 million

FY'13 MCH funding request: Level funding with FY'12 or adequate funding so as to avoid the need for eligibility changes

2.) HomeBASE program (line item 7004-0108).

Conference Committee Outcome: The committee adopted the lower House funding level of \$83.4 million and compromise language. As anticipated, families will be limited to no more than 24-months of assistance, as opposed to the 36-months proposed in FY'12. Household assistance benefits will be capped at \$4,000/family, and no new families will be enrolled in the rental assistance component of HomeBASE.

FY'13 Conference Committee funding level: \$83.4 million

FY'12 funding level: Currently \$65.3 million (including the latest [supplemental appropriation](#))

FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$83.4 million

FY'13 House funding level: \$83.4 million

FY'13 Senate funding level: \$90.8 million

FY'13 MCH funding request: Adequate funding to continue serving current participants and to be able to offer rental assistance, household assistance, and moving assistance to new families in FY'13

3.) Shelter and services for unaccompanied individuals at-risk of and experiencing homelessness (line item 7004-0102).

Conference Committee Outcome: The Conference Committee funded this line item at just under \$40.5 million, slightly less than the Senate's higher recommended funding level. The committee included Senate language that sets a floor of \$25/bed /night as the average reimbursement rate for each provider agency.

FY'13 Conference Committee funding level: \$40.5 million

FY'12 funding level: \$37.7 million

FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$38.9 million

FY'13 House funding level: \$38.0 million

FY'13 Senate funding level: \$40.5 million

FY'13 MCH funding request: At least \$38.9 million

4.) Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP, line item 7004-9024).

Conference Committee Outcome: The Conference Committee funded MRVP at the Senate's lower appropriation level of \$42 million (\$4 million less than the House's proposed MRVP appropriation level). The committee did not adopt the House's language that would direct the newly created vouchers to families who are in EA and in desperate need of permanent, stable housing.

FY'13 Conference Committee funding level: \$42.0 million

FY'12 funding level: \$36.0 million

FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$46.0 million

FY'13 House funding level: \$46.0 million

FY'13 Senate funding level: \$42.0 million

FY'13 MCH funding request: \$46.0 million

5.) Residential Assistance for Families in Transition program (RAFT, line item 7004-9316).

Conference Committee Outcome: The Conference Committee funded RAFT at the \$8.8 million level recommended by both branches, and adopted compromise language. The maximum benefit will be \$4,000/eligible family/year (minus any funds a family may have received under the HomeBASE household assistance/moving assistance programs). The language targets 90% of the funds to families at or below 30% of the area median income, with a priority for families who otherwise would be eligible for Emergency Assistance shelter.

FY'13 Conference Committee funding level: \$8.8 million

FY'12 funding level: \$260,000

FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$8.8 million

FY'13 House funding level: \$8.8 million

FY'13 Senate funding level: \$8.8 million

FY'13 MCH funding request: \$8.8 million

6.) Public Housing Authority Operating Subsidies (line item 7004-9005).

Conference Committee Outcome: The committee adopted the House's higher funding level of \$64.5 million.

FY'13 Conference Committee funding level: \$64.5 million
FY'12 funding level: \$62.5 million
FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$66.5 million
FY'13 House funding level: \$64.5 million
FY'13 Senate funding level: \$62.5 million
FY'13 MCH funding request: \$71.0 million

7.) Home and Healthy for Good Program (line item 7004-0104)

Conference Committee Outcome: The committee funded the program at \$1.4 million, \$200,000 more than the FY'12 level.

FY'13 Conference Committee funding level: \$1.4 million
FY'12 funding level: \$1.2 million
FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$2.2 million
FY'13 House funding level: \$1.4 million
FY'13 Senate funding level: \$1.4 million
FY'13 MCH funding request: \$2.2 million

Conference Committee Outcomes for Selected Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) Line Items

1.) Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children Program (EAEDC, line item 4408-1000).

Conference Committee Outcome: The committee adopted the Senate's version of EAEDC funding, which at \$87.3 million, is \$1 million less than the House's recommendation. The language requires the Administration to give the Legislature 60 days advance notice (as opposed to the final Senate budget's proposed 90 days notice) before imposing new eligibility restrictions or benefit reductions.

FY'13 Conference Committee funding level: \$87.3 million
FY'12 funding level: \$89 million
FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$88.3 million
FY'13 House funding level: \$88.3 million
FY'13 Senate funding level: \$87.3 million
FY'13 MCH funding request: \$89.0 million

2.) Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children grants (TAFDC, line item 4403-2000).

Conference Committee Outcome: The committee adopted the Senate's version of TAFDC funding (\$315.4 million, which is significantly less than the current FY'12 spending level of \$324.2 million) and the House's 60-day advanced notice language. As with EAEDC, the Conference Committee budget language requires the Administration to give the Legislature 60 days advance notice (as opposed to the Senate's proposed 90 days notice) before imposing new eligibility restrictions or benefit reductions.

FY'13 Conference Committee funding level: \$315.4 million
FY'12 funding level: \$324.2 million (with supplemental appropriation)
FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$318.9 million
FY'13 House funding level: \$322.8 million
FY'13 Senate funding level: \$315.4 million

MCH funding request: Adequate funding to at least maintain current eligibility standards and benefit levels.

3.) Electronic Benefit Transfer Issues (EBT, Outside Sections 52-54, 173-176).

Conference Committee Outcome: The committee adopted compromise language pertaining to the use of public benefits and EBT cards. The language, among many other things, prohibits the use of cards for purchasing certain items/services (such as tattoos, jewelry, vacations, firearms, etc.), adds in new penalties for making prohibited purchases, adds in replacement fees for lost cards, and calls for the creation of a commission to move towards a "cashless" system.

4.) Teen Living Program Account (line item 4403-2119).

Conference Committee Outcome: The committee funded the program at \$8.0 million, closer to the Senate's higher recommended funding level of \$8.1 million.

FY'13 Conference Committee funding level: \$8.0 million
FY'12 funding level: \$6.4 million
FY'13 House 2 funding level: \$7.7 million
FY'13 House funding level: \$7.7 million

FY'13 Senate funding level: \$8.1 million

Other Coalition Budget Priorities

1.) Special Commission on Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness (Conference Committee Outside Section 208).

Conference Committee Outcome: The committee adopted the Senate's final language, as redrafted in Senate Amendment 584 (as opposed to the very similar language in House Outside Section 146). We are very excited that both the House and the Senate have expressed their commitment to ending and preventing unaccompanied youth homelessness by including language for a Special Commission in their respective final versions of the budget! The Senate's language was slightly better, as it clarifies the members who will make up the Special Commission. See Section 208 on pages 268-269 for the language and to learn more about this Special Commission.

2.) Costs associated with transporting students experiencing homelessness under the McKinney-Vento Act (line item 4035-0005).

Conference Committee Outcome: The committee adopted the House's proposed \$11.3 million of funding under the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to reimburse districts for the transportation costs associated with the McKinney-Vento Act. In their version of the budget, the Senate did not recommend appropriating funds for these reimbursements; instead, they called for DESE to conduct a study of the costs to districts (Senate Outside Section 124). Click here for a general fact sheet on transportation costs associated with the McKinney-Vento Act.

3.) Furniture Bank Programs to Assist Families and Individuals Exiting Homelessness.

Unfortunately, the Coalition's request for \$200,000 in funding to help support a statewide network of furniture banks to assist low-income households transitioning from homelessness into housing (through Line Item 7004-0099) was not included in either the Senate or the House budgets. We have laid a foundation for next year's budget, and anticipate that we will continue to pursue funding in FY'14.

Next Steps

We anticipate that the Legislature will vote to approve the Conference Committee's recommendations today, and then send the budget to the Governor. The Governor will have 10 days to approve sections of the budget and issue vetoes. We will keep you informed as the Governor issues his vetoes and signs other parts into law.

Please call Governor Patrick to ask him to:

- 1.) Make sure that the positive housing and homelessness elements of the Conference Committee budget are enacted in FY'13.
- 2.) Do all he can administratively to protect families and individuals at-risk and experiencing homelessness.

The Governor's office can be reached by phone at 1-888-870-7770. Additional contact information can be found [here](#).

Please also contact your Legislators to thank them for their support for housing, homelessness, and safety net programs in the FY'13 budget.

Legislators can be reached through the State House switchboard at 617-722-2000, or can you go [here](#) to search for your elected officials based on your address.

Thank you for your advocacy and support!

For more information, please contact [Kelly Turley](#) at 781-595-7570 x17.

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Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless



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Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless | 15 Bubier St. | Lynn | MA | 01901