



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

LEGISLATIVE ACTION DAY



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

Media Advisory: Important Legislative Action Day This Thursday on Key Homelessness and Housing Issues at the State House

WHAT: The Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless (“the Coalition”) will hold its annual [Legislative Action Day](#) this Thursday, February 28th at the State House. The event will mobilize more than 250 families, youth, and adults experiencing homelessness, advocates, providers, legislative cosponsors, and allies to take action in support of [key legislative and budgetary campaigns](#) on homelessness and housing issues. The day also will provide an opportunity for legislators, their staff, and the public to learn more about the Coalition’s work to prevent and end homelessness in the Commonwealth. State Representative Jim O’Day (D-West Boylston), the House Chair of the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, will be hosting Legislative Action Day.

A key area of focus will be the Coalition’s campaign to re-establish a statewide rental arrearage program by passing An Act to Further Provide a Rental Arrearage Program, [House Docket 2395](#). The bill was filed in January by Representative Marjorie Decker of Cambridge and is awaiting committee assignment. The rent arrearage bill was cosponsored by 71 other legislators, and currently has been endorsed by 93 organizations across the state. The Coalition also is leading up a related budget campaign to create a \$7 million pilot program to begin to provide upstream homelessness prevention resources to households that have fallen behind on rent or mortgage payments but are not yet in the eviction or foreclosure process as part of the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition homelessness prevention program (RAFT, line item 7004-9316).

Another key request will be to overturn existing state policies that require many children and families who are experiencing homelessness to stay in places not meant for human habitation before becoming eligible for Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter. Since the policy was implemented in late 2012, more than 3,600 otherwise eligible families have stayed in hospital emergency departments, cars, campgrounds, transit stations, and other unsafe places before being approved for shelter and rehousing services by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Participants will push for changes to the state’s budget language for the Emergency Assistance program (line item 7004-0101) and passage of An Act to Protect Families Experiencing Homelessness from Having to Sleep in Unsafe Places, [House Docket 2406](#). This bill also was filed by Representative Marjorie Decker of Cambridge, and currently is awaiting committee assignment. The EA bill was cosponsored by 62 other legislators. Language similar to the bill language has been included in the Senate version of the state budget by Senate President Karen Spilka and Senate Leadership for the past several years.

Participants also will push for increased funds and improvements to critical programs such as housing and services for unaccompanied youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness (line item 4000-0007), the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP, line item 7004-9024 and House Docket 3872/Senate Docket 864), and the Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children program (EAEDC, line item 4408-1000 and House Docket 605/Senate Docket 1382). The group also will ask lawmakers to pass legislation to remove cost burdens and excess verification barriers for people experiencing homelessness who are in need of Massachusetts identification cards (House Docket 1263/Senate Docket 667), create a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness (House Docket 2776/Senate Docket 1952), better uphold the safety, dignity, and civil rights of people experiencing homelessness (House Docket 3764/Senate Docket 1950), and ensure that tenants have counsel in eviction proceedings (Senate Docket 625).

WHO: Scheduled speakers include:

- Representative James O’Day, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, lead sponsor of An Act Relative to Assisting Elders and People with Disabilities in the Commonwealth (a.k.a. the EAEDC bill), lead sponsor of youth homelessness budget amendments, and sponsor of Legislative Action Day
- Senate President Karen Spilka, chief Senate author of the FY’19 state budget and lead Senate sponsor of efforts to protect families experiencing homelessness from having to sleep in unsafe places

- Senator Becca Rausch, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs, and lead sponsor of An Act Providing a Bill of Rights for People Experiencing Homelessness and An Act Relative to the Safety, Dignity, and Civil Rights of Persons Experiencing Homelessness
- Representative Kay Khan, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities, and lead sponsor of An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families
- Senate President Emerita Harriette Chandler, lead sponsor of An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families
- Representative Marjorie Decker, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery, and lead sponsor of An Act to Further Provide a Rental Arrearage Program, An Act to Protect Families Experiencing Homelessness from Having to Sleep in Unsafe Places, An Act to Lift the Cap on Kids, and An Act to Reduce Deep Poverty among Kids
- Senator Sal DiDomenico, Assistant Majority Leader, Chair of the Senate Committee on Bills in the Third Reading, and lead sponsor of An Act to Lift the Cap on Kids, and An Act to Lift Kids Out of Deep Poverty
- Senator Jamie Eldridge, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary, and lead sponsor of An Act Relative to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program
- Representative William Smitty Pignatelli, Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture and lead sponsor of An Act Providing a Bill of Rights for People Experiencing Homelessness
- Representative Denise Provost, lead sponsor of An Act to End Child Homelessness
- Senator Patricia Jehlen, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, and lead sponsor of An Act Relative to Assisting Elders and People with Disabilities in the Commonwealth
- Filipe Zamborlini, Public Policy Director, Rosie's Place
- Nakita Haywood, One Family, Inc. Program Participant
- Kaytie Holbrook, Member, Boston Youth Action Board
- Lynnette Martin, Community Speaker
- Dr. Lois Lee, M.D., Boston Pediatrician
- Dustin Parady, Member, Boston Youth Action Board and Team Leader, True Colors Foundation
- Marybeth, Member, Worcester Fellowship
- Yolanda Ortiz, Program Director, Tempo Young Adult Resource Center, Wayside Youth & Family Support Network
- Program Participant, Tempo Young Adult Resource Center, Wayside Youth & Family Support Network
- Maxwell Nashashuk, Queer Youth and Young Adult Homelessness Advocate
- Program Participant, The Haven Project
- Warren, Member, Boston Youth Action Board
- Andrew Maier, Member, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program Community Advisory Board
- Molly Schulman, Community Organizer/Legislative Advocate, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
- James Saucedo, Community Organizer/Legislative Advocate, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
- Kelly Turley, Associate Director, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless

WHEN: Thursday, February 28, 2019, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.; with speaking portion 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and legislative visits 1:00–3:00 p.m.

WHERE: Massachusetts State House, Great Hall, Second Floor

WHY: Across the Commonwealth, thousands of households are experiencing homelessness and/or struggling with housing instability. Concrete action can and should be taken at the state level to promote homelessness prevention, housing stability, human rights, and human dignity. As the House and Senate develop their FY'20 budget proposals and debate pending legislation during the 2019-2020 legislative session, the Coalition and allies seek to elevate key homelessness and housing solutions.

HOW: For interviews, please contact Kelly Turley at kelly@mahomeless.org or 617-652-0472 (cell). Please also find resources at www.mahomeless.org/advocacy/item/legislative-action-day-2019.

###