



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

January 29, 2019

Please Sign on to Key Homelessness, Housing, and Benefits Bills for the New Legislative Session

We have been working with legislators to file and refile critical legislation related to homelessness, housing, and benefits. **We hope that you can support these efforts by cosponsoring and actively supporting the bills listed below and on this longer list: <http://tinyurl.com/bills20192020>**

Top Bill Priority Campaigns

- Re-establish an upstream statewide rental arrearage program to help households (families, youth, elders, people with disabilities, et al.) avoid homelessness by providing back rent assistance

- Lead Sponsor: Representative Marjorie Decker
- Bill Name: An Act to further provide a rental arrearage program
- Docket Number: House Docket 2395
- The program would be under the Departments of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and allow access to resources before a household has begun the eviction process. Eligible households could qualify for funding to cover up to 4 months' back rent or back mortgage payments. It would be a companion program to the existing Residential Assistance for Families in Transition program (RAFT), which currently only is available later on in the eviction and foreclosure processes.

- Ensure that families experiencing homelessness do not have to stay in a place not meant for human habitation before being eligible for Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter and services

- Lead Sponsor: Representative Marjorie Decker
- Bill Name: An Act to protect families experiencing homelessness from having to sleep in unsafe places
- Docket Number: House Docket 2406
- Over 3,500 families have stayed in places not meant for human habitation before later being approved for shelter since a misguided policy was implemented in 2012 requiring many families to do so.

- Ease access to standard Massachusetts ID cards for people experiencing homelessness by eliminating the \$25 fee and allowing alternative ways to verify Massachusetts residency without requiring a permanent address

- Lead Sponsors: Senator Harriette Chandler and Representative Kay Khan
- Bill Name: An Act to provide identification to homeless youth and families
- Docket Numbers: Senate Docket 667 and House Docket 1263
- This bill would allow access to standard Mass IDs, not REAL ID Act-compliant Mass IDs, for which residents must provide additional verifications that meet federal standards.

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- Improve the Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children program (EAEDC)

- Lead Sponsors: Senator Pat Jehlen and Representative Jim O'Day
- Bill Name: An Act relative to assisting elders and people with disabilities in the Commonwealth
- Docket Numbers: Senate Docket 1382 and House Docket 605
- This bill would put the recent removal of the EAEDC homelessness penalty into statute, increase monthly grant levels, provide an annual cost of living adjustment, and increase the program's asset limit from \$250 to \$2,500.

- Establish a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness

- Lead Sponsors: Senator Becca Rausch and Representative Smitty Pignatelli
- Bill Name: An Act providing a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness
- Docket Numbers: Senate Docket 1952 and House Docket 2776; very similar legislation also was filed by Senator Nick Collins: Senate Docket 2170
- This bill would be a statement of legislative intent, recognizing and affirming various rights of people experiencing homelessness, such as the right to move freely in public spaces, the right to confidentiality of records, the right to privacy of property, the right to register to vote and to vote, etc.

- Promote the safety, dignity, and civil rights of people experiencing homelessness

- Lead Sponsors: Senator Becca Rausch and Representative Liz Miranda
- Bill Name: An Act relative to the safety, dignity, and civil rights of persons experiencing homelessness
- Docket Numbers: Senate Docket 1950 and House Docket 3764
- This bill would build on the work to decrease discrimination and to establish a bill of rights (see above), and would provide additional civil rights protections for people experiencing homelessness. The bill would affirm the right to rest, eat, pray, and be in public spaces by amending the Commonwealth's public spaces laws (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 45), amend the Commonwealth's voting laws to affirm the right to register to vote without a permanent address (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 50, Section 1), amend the Commonwealth's anti-discrimination laws to include housing status (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 151B), and repeal archaic sections of Massachusetts General Laws regarding so-called "tramps", "vagrants", and "vagabonds" (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 272, Sections 63-69).

See our full list of bill priorities here: <http://tinyurl.com/bills20192020>

Please sign on as a cosponsor to these critical homelessness, housing, and benefits bills today!

Thank you for your support and collaboration to address and end homelessness for families, individuals, and youth across the Commonwealth.

For more information, please contact the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless:
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