



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

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



### Support and Protect Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness:

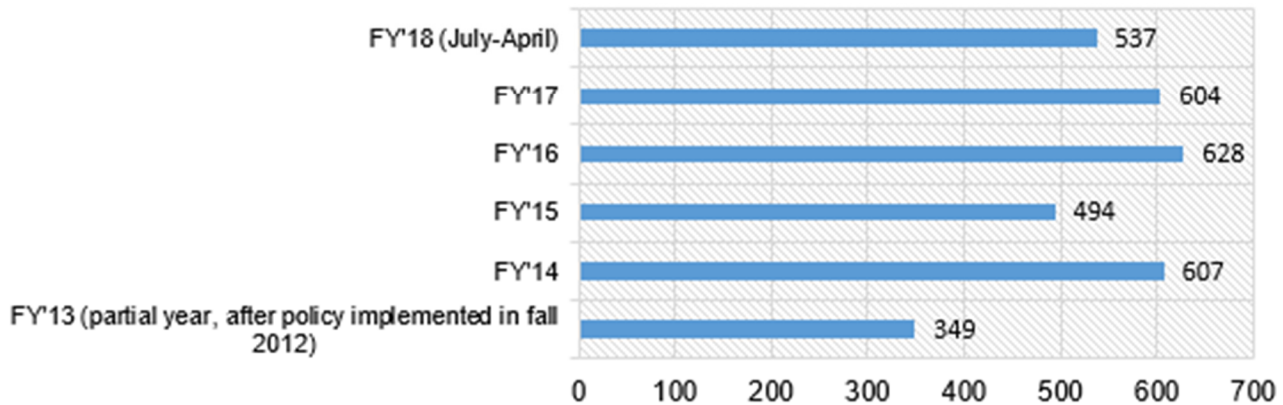
**Actively Support the Inclusion of the Senate's Emergency Assistance Language on Preventing Families from Having to Sleep in Places Not Meant for Human Habitation in Line Item 7004-0101 of the FY'19 Conference Committee Budget**

**The Senate language would allow otherwise eligible families to access Emergency Assistance family shelter (EA) before having to prove that they have stayed in places not meant for human habitation.**

- Senate language: "provided further, that temporary emergency assistance shall be provided to families who, on the date of application for emergency assistance, have no other feasible alternative housing as defined in 760 CMR 67.06.1(b) and who, but for not having spent 1 night in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings including, but not limited to, a car, park, abandoned building, medical facility, bus or train station, airport or campground, would be eligible for emergency assistance under clauses (i) to (iv), inclusive"
- Based on the state's own data, **604 families with children** had to sleep in cars, bus stations, emergency rooms and other unsafe places in FY'17 *before* they were found eligible for emergency shelter through the state's Emergency Assistance (EA) program. In the first ten months of FY'18, another **537 families** were approved for EA only after staying in such dire circumstances (17% of all families entering shelter, for an average of 54 families/month).
- Families are showing up at hospital clinics and emergency rooms **with no other safe place to sleep**, which in turn drives up health care costs. Educators across the state are expressing concern about the fate of their students whose educations are being disrupted as their families search for a safe place to sleep.
- This crisis is due to onerous shelter eligibility restrictions imposed by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in September 2012. Under these regulations, in the first eight months of FY'18, at least 40% of the families who applied for shelter were denied (2,209 out of 5,503 families that completed applications, as reported by DHCD). For FY'17, the denial rate was 47% (4,264 out of 9,124 families applying).
- Based on DHCD's own numbers, we estimate that approximately **700-1,000 families** per year will first have to stay in places not meant for human habitation before getting shelter if this new language is not adopted.
- If each of these families got placed in shelter one night earlier to avoid this fate, **the cost to the Commonwealth would be only about \$91,000-\$130,000 per year** (based on the average cost of \$130/night, as reported by DHCD in January 2018). Even if each family received shelter two nights earlier, the cost would be less than **\$300,000 per year**.
- DHCD's own data shows that many of these families are getting into shelter now – but only after sleeping in unfit places. It has gone too far.

## Over 3,200 Families Have Stayed in Places Not Meant for Human Habitation Before Being Able to Access State-Funded Emergency Assistance Shelter

\* Data from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development



Please actively support the inclusion of the Senate's places not meant for human habitation language in Line Item 7004-0101 in the FY'19 Conference Committee budget

For more information, please contact Kelly Turley of the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless at [kelly@mahomeless.org](mailto:kelly@mahomeless.org) or 781-595-7570 x17.



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