

ABCD Boston Hispanic Center

Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness

AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts

Amherst Community Connections

Amherst Housing For All Citizens Group

Arise for Social Justice

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center

Boston College Legal Assistance Bureau

Boston Healthy Homes & Schools Collaborative

Boston Medical Center

Boston Tenant Coalition

Casa Myrna Vazquez, Inc.

Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Boston

Catholic Charities, Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield

Catholic Charities Worcester County

Catholic Social Services, Diocese of Fall River

Children's HealthWatch Boston

Church on the Hill

City Life/Vida Urbana

Coalition for Social Justice

Community Legal Aid

Community Legal Services and Counseling Center

Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals

Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries

Eliot Community Human Services - Homeless Services

Elizabeth Stone House

Emmaus, Inc.

Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston

Family Economic Initiative

Family Promise Metrowest

Fenway Community Development Corporation

Greater Boston Legal Services

Greater Four Corners Action Coalition

Grey Nuns of Lexington - Ecology, Justice & Peace Committee

Homes for Families

Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action

Jewish Family & Children's Service

Julie's Family Learning Program

Lynn Clergy and Religious Group

Massachusetts Advocates for Children

Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy

Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless

Massachusetts Hospital Association

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

Medical-Legal Partnership | Boston

MetroWest Legal Services

National Association of Social Workers, MA Chapter

Neighborhood Legal Services

Neighbor to Neighbor Massachusetts

North Shore Community Development Coalition

Partners HealthCare

Promise the Children

REACH Beyond Domestic Violence

Roca, Inc.

Rosie's Place

Sojourner House

Somerville Community Corporation

Somerville Homeless Coalition

Task Team to End Homelessness of the Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ

Temple Emanu-El (Marblehead)

The Spirit of Life: A Catholic Community of Justice & Joy

Tri-City Community Action Program, Inc.

Travelers Aid Family Services

UU Mass Action (Unitarian Universalist)

Victim Rights Law Center

Women's Bar Association

October 26, 2012

His Excellency Deval Patrick, Governor

The Honorable Therese Murray, Senate President

The Honorable Robert DeLeo, Speaker of the House

The Honorable Stephen Brewer, Chairman, Senate Committee on Ways & Means

The Honorable Brian Dempsey, Chairman, House Committee on Ways & Means

The State House

Boston, MA 02133

Re: Restoring Access to Emergency Assistance Shelter for Vulnerable Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness

Dear Governor Patrick, Senate President Murray, Speaker DeLeo, Chairman Brewer, and Chairman Dempsey:

As organizations from across the Commonwealth that are committed on a daily basis to ensuring the well being of low-income children and their families, we have come together to voice our concerns about the new restrictions on access to Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter that have been implemented by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Under these eligibility restrictions, adopted via emergency regulations, vulnerable families are being turned away each day, even when they have no safe place to stay that night with their children. Without your intervention, these new regulations will render thousands of children and families ineligible for shelter in the year ahead.

As you know, the FY'13 budget requires DHCD to provide shelter to families with children and/or pregnant women who fall into at least one of the four new eligibility categories: families experiencing homelessness due to (1) domestic violence, (2) fire, flood, or natural disaster, or (3) certain "excused fault" evictions, as well as (4) those living in places not meant for human habitation or double-up situations that present significant health and safety risks. It is important to note that while the budget does not limit access to the safety net to *only* these families, DHCD's regulations do.

We are especially concerned about families who are at imminent risk of having to sleep in places not meant for human habitation with their children. **Under the current regulations, most families must first actually stay in a place not meant for human habitation before becoming eligible for shelter.** As a result of these policy changes, each night across the Commonwealth, families who previously would have been provided with the safety net of shelter are left to sleep in cars, vans, parks, beaches, campgrounds, outdoor porches, and other unsafe places before their shelter applications can be approved. Other families are turning up in emergency rooms in unprecedented numbers, burdening our already overwhelmed health care system. Some families are taking their chances and going home with strangers offering assistance, in the hopes that these hosts truly will be "Good Samaritans".

We are grateful to you and others within the Administration and Legislature for this year's increased investments in housing programs like the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) and the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) homelessness prevention program. Unfortunately, those investments are not sufficient to protect the families with children being denied emergency shelter who have no safe place to sleep *tonight*.

We are coming together to ask you to revise the Emergency Assistance regulations to provide access to shelter for families at imminent risk of having to stay in places not meant for human habitation, and to make the necessary increased investments in housing, homelessness prevention, and safety net programs in FY'13 and the years to come. Without these investments, Massachusetts will be unable to reach our shared goal of preventing and ending homelessness here in the Commonwealth.

Your leadership is needed so that we can preserve the safety net of shelter while making renewed investments in prevention and housing. As the nights get darker and colder, now is the time to act.

Sincerely,

Robyn Frost
Executive Director
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless

Libby Hayes
Executive Director
Homes for Families

Lisa O'Connor, RN, BSN, MS, NEAA-BC
Senior Vice President of Clinical Operations and
Chief Nursing Officer
Boston Medical Center

Dr. Kevin Tabb
President and CEO
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Gary L. Gottlieb, M.D., M.B.A.
President and Chief Executive Officer
Partners HealthCare

John Erwin
Executive Director
Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals

Michael E. Sroczynski, Esq.
Vice President, Government Advocacy
Massachusetts Hospital Association

Megan Sandel, MD, MPH
Co-Principal Investigator
Children's HealthWatch Boston

Beth Cooper
Director
Family Promise Metrowest

Debra Fastino
Executive Director
Coalition for Social Justice

Patricia Quinn
Executive Director
Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy

Jerry Mogul
Executive Director
Massachusetts Advocates for Children

Carol Trust, LICSW
Executive Director
National Association of Social Workers, MA
Chapter

Bruce Liddell
Executive Director
Travelers Aid Family Services

Kathy Brown
Coordinator
Boston Tenant Coalition

Holly Richardson
President
Arise for Social Justice

Sheila Casey
Executive Director
Neighborhood Legal Services

Philip Bronder-Giroux
Executive Director
Tri-City Community Action Program, Inc.

Georgia Katsoulomitis
Executive Director
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

Jacqui Bowman
Executive Director
Greater Boston Legal Services

Mary McGeown
President and CEO
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of
Cruelty to Children

Elizabeth Toulan
Coordinator
Family Economic Initiative

Andrea Kramer
President
Women's Bar Association

Gina Scaramella
Executive Director
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center

Jeanine Murphy
Executive Director
Emmaus, Inc.

Jonathan L. Mannina
Executive Director
Community Legal Aid

Samantha Morton
Executive Director
Medical-Legal Partnership | Boston

Deborah Kincade Rambo
President
Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Boston

Catherine Loeffler
Executive Director
Catholic Charities Worcester County

Arlene MacNamee
Executive Director
Catholic Social Services, Diocese of Fall River

Kathryn Buckley-Brawner
Director
Catholic Charities of the Roman Catholic Diocese
of Springfield

Sue Marsh
Executive Director
Rosie's Place

Anastasia Lopopolo
Executive Director
Sojourner House

Andrew Fischer
President
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action

Rebecca Haag
President and CEO
AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts

Mark Alston-Follansbee
Executive Director
Somerville Homeless Coalition

Carl N. Miller
Coordinator
Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness

Mirta Rodriguez, Director of Operations
Isamar Ramos, Case Manager
Boston Hispanic Center
Action for Boston Community Development

Danny LeBlanc
Executive Director
Somerville Community Corporation

Dharmena Downey
Executive Director
Fenway Community Development Corporation

Elizabeth A. Soule
Executive Director
MetroWest Legal Services

Jesse Jaeger
Executive Director
UU Mass Action (Unitarian Universalist)

Rev. Dr. Peter Wells, Associate Conference
Minister
Rev. Dr. Fran Bogle, Interim Chair
Task Team to End Homelessness of the
MA Conference, United Church of Christ

Brad York, President
Deahn Leblang, Social Action Chair
Temple Emanu-El (Marblehead)

Hwei-Ling Greeney
Executive Director
Amherst Community Connections

Rimma Zelfand
Chief Executive Officer
Jewish Family & Children's Service

Kenyatta Saunders
Stabilization Case Manager
Elizabeth Stone House

Jay S. Levy, LICSW
Regional Manager
Eliot Community Human Services - Homeless
Services

Maria Pizzimenti
Director of Advocacy
REACH Beyond Domestic Violence

Stacy Malone, Esq.
Executive Director
Victim Rights Law Center

Mickey Northcutt
Executive Director
North Shore Community Development Coalition

Rebekah Richardson
President
Promise the Children

Alice E. Kidder
Interim Executive Director
Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries

Barbara Mitchell
Executive Director
Community Legal Services and Counseling Center

Davida Andelman
Program Manager, Healthy Homes
Boston Healthy Homes & Schools
Collaborative/Health Resources in Action

Ellie Manire-Gatti
Faith Community Liaison
Amherst Housing For All Citizens Group

Rev. Eric Nelson
Chair
Lynn Clergy and Religious Group

Sharon Reilly
Executive Director
Women's Lunch Place

Gina Walcott
Executive Director
Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston

Alexis Anderson, Director and Associate Clinical
Professor
Alan Minuskin, Associate Clinical Professor
Paul Tremblay, Clinical Professor
Boston College Legal Assistance Bureau

Sr. Jean Sullivan, SND
Director of Children's Services
Julie's Family Learning Program

Marvin Martin
Executive Director
Greater Four Corners Action Coalition

Michael Bancewicz
Church Administrator
Church on the Hill

Molly Baldwin
Executive Director
Roca, Inc.

Sr. Gladys Marhefka, SGM
Coordinator
Grey Nuns of Lexington - Ecology, Justice, and
Peace Committee

Deborah Collins-Gousby
Co-Executive Director
Casa Myrna Vazquez, Inc.

Curdina Hill
Executive Director
City Life/Vida Urbana

Juan Leyton
Executive Director
Neighbor to Neighbor Massachusetts

Rev. Jean Marie Marchant, Co-Pastor
Rev. Ronald Hindelang, Co-Pastor
The Spirit of Life: A Catholic Community of Justice
& Joy