June 9, 2016

The Time is Now! Help Advocate on Housing, Homelessness, and Safety Net Issues as the Legislature Finalizes the FY’17 State Budget

Read Below for More Details on Housing, Homelessness, and Safety Net Issues Up for Debate

Greetings!

Tomorrow, the Legislature’s Joint Conference Committee on the fiscal year 2017 budget is set to begin its deliberations to work out the differences between the House and Senate proposed budgets for the year ahead. The compromise budget that comes out of the Conference Committee then will be brought to the House and Senate members for a final vote before being sent to the Governor.

As we reported last week, this year’s House Conference Committee members are: Representatives Brian Dempsey (D-Haverhill, Chair of House Ways and Means), Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington, Vice Chair of House Ways and Means), and Todd Smola (R-Warren, Minority Member of House Ways and Means). The Senate Conference Committee members are Senators Karen Spilka (D-Ashland, Chair of Senate Ways and Means), Sal DiDomenico (D-Everett, Vice Chair of Senate Ways and Mean), and Vinny deMacedo (R-Plymouth, Minority Member of Senate Ways and Means).

In order to ensure that the Conference Committee’s budget has the best language and highest levels of funding possible for housing and homelessness issues, please ask your own State Representative and Senator to actively support the housing and homelessness priorities listed in our letter to the conferees.

For more details on our top three priority line items (RAFT, Emergency Assistance, and housing and services for unaccompanied youth), please see below.

For program fact sheets and additional materials, please go to our Present Policy Campaigns page and our Conference Committee page.

Thank you for your advocacy and your continued support of housing and homelessness issues! We really are in the homestretch now!
Conference Committee Priorities

Our top three priorities are:

- **Expanding access to the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) homelessness prevention program**: Please ask your legislators to support the Senate version of the RAFT line item (7004-9316), which expands the definition of family to include elders, people with disabilities, unaccompanied youth, and other household types and adds $500,000 to serve these households, while retaining level funding of $12.5 million for families with children under the age of 21. The RAFT Conference Committee fact sheet and one-minute online action are here.

- **Allowing families to access Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter before they are forced to stay in places not meant for human habitation**: Please ask your legislators to support the Senate version of the EA line item (7004-0101), which allows otherwise eligible families to enter EA without having to prove that they already have stayed in an emergency room, car, campground, etc. The Emergency Assistance Conference Committee fact sheet is here.

- **Funding housing and services for unaccompanied youth and young adults at least $2 million**: Please ask your legislators to support the Senate version of the unaccompanied youth line item (4000-0007), which is $1 million more than the House version. The unaccompanied youth Conference Committee fact sheet is here.

Our full priority list, including our Massachusetts Rental Voucher...
Program, HomeBASE, Alternative Housing Voucher Program, Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children Program and other requests, is here.

Take Action!

Please reach out to your State Representative and Senator to ask them to weigh in with their colleagues on the FY’17 budget Conference Committee in support of these programs and funding levels for key housing, homelessness, and benefits programs.

Legislators can be reached via the State House switchboard (617-722-2000) or directly through the links listed here. To look up legislators by your home address, go to www.wheredoivotema.com.

If you have additional time, please reach out directly to the conferees, via the links listed above with their names.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY!

4,458 HOUSEHOLDS WOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REGAIN STABILITY BY EXPANDING ACCESS TO RAFT, A KEY HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM (LINE ITEM 7004-9316)

http://tinyurl.com/actnow4raft

FY’17 Budget: House and Senate Recommendations for Housing, Shelter, Homelessness Prevention, and Cash Assistance Programs

To access the House's complete budget recommendations, please go to FY’17 House budget recommendations. For the Coalition's analysis, please go to the Coalition's House budget advocacy page.

To access the Senate's complete budget recommendations, please go to FY’17 Senate budget recommendations. For the Coalition's analysis,
We hope you will join us as the Coalition continues to push for the protection of housing and homelessness programs for FY'17. We will keep you informed of the progress as the state's budget makes it way through the final stages in the weeks ahead.

For more information, please contact Kelly Turley at kelly@mahomeless.org or 781-595-7570 x17.