



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

Please Actively Support Key Homelessness, Housing, Benefits, and Equity Bills in the 2025-2026 Legislative Session

Top Bill Priority Campaigns

- Permanently establish and improve the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) homelessness prevention program

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Marjorie Decker and Senator Brendan Crighton
- **Bill Name:** An Act providing upstream homelessness prevention assistance to families, youth, and adults
- **Bill Numbers:** House Bill 1488/Senate Bill 961
- **Description:** This bill would put the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) homelessness prevention program into state statute and ensure that benefits are available to families and individuals earlier in a housing or utility crisis ("upstream", before a household has received a notice to quit or utility shut-off notice). The bill also seeks to streamline access, improve cross-agency collaboration, and allow households to receive up to twelve months of assistance, without arbitrary dollar caps. (The current cap is \$7,000/family/year, regardless of household size or rent burden). In addition, the bill would require the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) to publicly post reports on RAFT to increase transparency on how the program is operating and provide greater understanding of the families and individuals seeking RAFT assistance: how they are being referred, how many apply, how many are approved, how many are denied, what are their demographics, what are their rent and mortgage levels, what RAFT benefits they receive, and what is the housing status of participant households 6, 12, and 24 months after receiving financial assistance or services from RAFT.

- 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:** Representative Jim O'Day/Representative Sean Garballey and Senator Robyn Kennedy
- **Bill Name:** An Act to provide identification to youth and adults experiencing homelessness
- **Bill Numbers:** House Bill 3750/Senate Bill 2399
- **Description:** The Mass ID access bill (a.k.a. Everyone Needs ID bill) would ease access to Mass IDs for people experiencing homelessness by waiving the \$25 fee for IDs and easing the verification requirements for youth and adults who are unhoused and seeking IDs. The bill would apply to standard Mass IDs, not REAL ID Act-compliant Mass IDs, for which residents must provide additional verifications that meet federal standards. The Senate has unanimously passed versions of this bill in each of the past four sessions.

- Expand access to bridge subsidies for older adults across the Commonwealth who are experiencing housing instability

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Shirley Arriaga and Senator Pat Jehlen
- **Bill Name:** An Act promoting housing stability for older adults across the Commonwealth
- **Bill Numbers:** House Bill 4015/Senate Bill 475
- **Description:** This bill would expand the bridge subsidy program for low-income older adults, aged 60 years and older, facing housing instability. A version of the program currently is funded as a pilot in the City of Somerville. The program would allow eligible older adults to remain in place while they await approval for long-term subsidized housing through programs such as the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program

(MRVP) and state-funded public housing. The bill also would create a steering committee to help guide the expansion of the bridge subsidy program. The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities would lead the steering committee, which would include key stakeholders such as older adults with lived experience of housing instability, providers, advocates, legislators, and a representative from the Executive Office of Aging and Independence.

- Ease access to the Emergency Assistance program (EA) and to create an ombudsperson unit to assist families applying for and participating in EA and HomeBASE

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Marjorie Decker and Senator Adam Gomez
- **Bill Name:** An Act improving emergency housing assistance for children and families experiencing homelessness
- **Bill Numbers:** House Bill 216/Senate Bill 136
- **Description:** This omnibus legislation would address access and administrative issues for families and children applying for or participating in the Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter program, temporary respite center program, and HomeBASE rehousing program. It would allow families who appear to be imminently at risk of homelessness to gain admission into EA shelter. It also would prohibit the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) from turning families away due to lack of documentation and would mandate EOHLC to look in existing state benefits databases to obtain requested documentation instead of delaying applications by requiring families to provide such documentation directly. In addition, the bill would require EOHLC to provide 90 days' notice to the Legislature, program participants, and the public before altering program benefits or eligibility that would not benefit families. The bill also would officially establish an independent ombudsperson unit located within EOHLC to mediate between EA and HomeBASE applicants/participants and EOHLC.

- Establish a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Frank Moran and Senator Adam Gomez
- **Bill Name:** An Act establishing a bill of rights for individuals experiencing homelessness/An Act providing a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness
- **Bill Numbers:** House Bill 274/Senate Bill 1120
- **Description:** This bill would recognize and affirm 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, and the right to register to vote and to vote. The bill 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, amend the Commonwealth's voting laws to affirm the right to vote and register to vote without a permanent address, amend the Commonwealth's anti-discrimination laws to include housing status, and repeal archaic sections of Massachusetts General Laws regarding so-called "tramps," "vagrants," and "vagabonds." The bill would give the Superior Court jurisdiction to enforce the rights included in the legislation.

- Permanently establish and improve the HomeBASE family rehousing program

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Christine Barber and Senator Liz Miranda
- **Bill Name:** An Act promoting housing stability for families by strengthening the HomeBASE program
- **Bill Numbers:** House Bill 1469/Senate Bill 1011
- **Description:** This bill would put the HomeBASE program into state statute, direct the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to provide renewals of HomeBASE rental assistance to families and children who otherwise would be facing a return to homelessness, allow families to access HomeBASE upstream to maintain existing housing if they otherwise would be eligible for the Emergency Assistance family shelter program, and increase the maximum benefit levels to \$50,000 over the first 24 months of the program and up to \$25,000 in subsequent years for families needing additional time in the program.

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

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Jim O'Day and Senator Pat Jehlen
- **Bill Name:** An Act relative to assisting elders and people with disabilities in the Commonwealth
- **Bill Numbers:** House Bill 278/ Senate Bill 138
- **Description:** This bill would improve the Department of Transitional Assistance's (DTA's) Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children program by ensuring that grants for participants experiencing homelessness are at the same level as the benefits for peers who have housing (putting the 2018 removal of the EAEDC homelessness penalty into statute), providing an annual cost of living adjustment for older adults and people with disabilities who are participating in EAEDC, and increasing grant levels to match the benefits provided under DTA's Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (TAFDC).

- Allow cities and towns to stabilize rents and protect tenants

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Dave Rogers/Representative Sam Montañó and Senator Pat Jehlen
- **Bill Name:** An Act enabling cities and towns to stabilize rents and protect tenants
- **Bill Numbers:** House Bill 2328/Senate Bill 1447
- **Description:** This bill would remove the statewide ban on rent control and establish a local option for cities and towns to regulate rents. If passed, cities and towns opting in would be able to limit annual rent increases and limit no fault evictions for certain dwelling units. The bill would limit annual rent increases for covered dwelling units to the change in the Consumer Price Index or 5%, whichever is lower.

More details about our bill and budget priorities will be posted here: <https://www.mahomeless.org/current-bill-and-budget-priorities>

Please actively support these critical homelessness, housing, benefits, and equity bills today!

Thank you for your support and collaboration to address and end homelessness for families with children, unaccompanied youth, older adults, people with disabilities, and other households across the Commonwealth.

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