



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

Please Do All You Can to Prevent and End Homelessness: Actively Support Key Budget Priorities in the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget to Increase Funding for Housing and Homelessness Prevention Resources and to Strengthen Safety Net Programs

Top Budget Priorities

1. Increase funding for the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program (RAFT, Line Item 7004-9316) and expand access to upstream homelessness prevention resources.

- Increase funding to \$300 million for RAFT in FY26.
- Prohibit the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) from requiring renters to have a notice to quit from their landlord before being approved for back rent assistance. This requirement, which was implemented by the Department of Housing and Community Development (the predecessor of EOHLC) in August 2022, pushes households deeper into an eviction process before becoming eligible for RAFT assistance.
- Increase the RAFT benefit cap beyond the current limit of \$7,000/household/year to \$10,000/household/year.
- Streamline the application process and allow renters to access funds even if their property owner is not cooperative with the RAFT application process, as was the practice under the former federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP).
- Allow households to maximize resources from RAFT, HomeBASE, and other rental assistance programs.
- Continue to mandate detailed tracking and reporting on households applying, approved, denied, demographics, and funding uses.

2. Restore the right to shelter, adequately fund emergency shelter and service programs for children and families experiencing homelessness, and support key provisions in the Emergency Assistance program line item (EA, Line Item 7004-0101 and the related administrative account, Line Item 7004-0099).

- Appropriate adequate funding in FY26 to provide shelter spaces to all eligible families (not capped at 5,800 families). The Administration has estimated that total FY25 spending on EA and a range of related services will be \$1.064 billion.
- Remove the length of stay limits, which are forcing families out of shelter before they can access safe housing.
- Eliminate the “dual track” system, which is kicking some families out of rapid track shelters in 30 business days.
- Restore presumptive eligibility, which would give more families who appear to be eligible temporary access to shelter while they gather documents to prove ongoing eligibility.
- Strengthen support for families leaving shelter, including by improving housing search, providing ongoing wraparound support, and increasing HomeBASE rehousing resources.

3. Expand access to a bridge subsidy program for older adults facing housing instability while awaiting longer-term subsidized housing (New Line Item 9110-XXXX; current pilot program funding is within Line Item 7004-0107).

- Provide \$10 million in FY26 to expand access to bridge subsidies for up to 1,000 older adults facing housing instability to allow them to remain in place while they await approval for public housing or subsidy through programs such as the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program.

- Low-income older adults (age 60 and over) participating in the bridge subsidy program would pay 30% of their income towards rent, with the bridge subsidy making up the difference in the total rent, up to 110% of the fair market rent.
- EOHLC, in collaboration with the Executive Office of Aging and Independence (EOAI), would administer the program.

4. Increase funding and provide easy renewals for families participating in the HomeBASE Program (a.k.a. Massachusetts Short-Term Housing Transition Program, Line Item 7004-0108).

- Provide \$80 million to continue payments to households currently enrolled in HomeBASE that need an extension and to enroll new households in both the diversion and shelter exit components of HomeBASE.
- 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.
- Allow families who otherwise would be eligible for Emergency Assistance to access HomeBASE "upstream", so that more families can maintain their existing apartments.
- Allow households to maximize resources from RAFT, HomeBASE, and other rental assistance programs.
- Allow families to maximize their incomes while enrolled in HomeBASE.
- Maintain FY25 language to require EOHLC to provide the Legislature 90 days advance notice before reducing eligibility or benefits.

5. Address the needs of unaccompanied youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness by increasing funding to \$15 million for housing/wraparound support services under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) youth and young adult homelessness program (Line Item 4000-0007).

- Increase funding to \$15 million for FY26, up from \$10.5 million in FY25. A \$15 million investment would provide needed ongoing funding for the unaccompanied youth homelessness law, M.G.L. Chapter 6A, Sections 16W and 16X, to better serve/partner with youth and young adults who are under the age of twenty-five and are without permanent housing.
- Funds would be available for EOHHS to use flexibly for housing, wraparound services, educational resources, and supports for young people experiencing homelessness without a parent or guardian; continuing the work to build up regional Youth Action Boards; and expanding access to underserved young people, especially young people who identify as Black, Latino, Indigenous, and/or LGBTQ+.
- Include \$100,000 to support the Boston Area Youth-Cash Assistance for Stable Housing (BAY-CASH) direct cash transfer program.

6. Increase funding for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP, Line Item 7004-9024).

- Increase funding to \$300 million to maintain existing services and benefits to households currently served by the program and to significantly increase the number of low-income households (including families, elders, and persons with disabilities) struggling with housing instability served by the program.

7. Provide free standard Mass IDs to eligible people experiencing homelessness (Relevant Outside Section and new funding within Line Item 1595-6368).

- Include \$75,000 and language in the Massachusetts Transportation Trust Fund line item and an outside section to provide free Mass IDs to people experiencing homelessness.

Additional Key Budget Priorities

8. Adequately fund and protect key support programs for low-income families and individuals.

- **Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children Program (EAEDC, Line Item 4408-1000):** Provide adequate funding in FY26 to allow for grant increases and maintain language that requires the Administration to give the Legislature 75 days' advance notice before reducing benefits or imposing new limits on program eligibility.



- **Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC, Line Item 4403-2000)**: Provide adequate funding in FY26 to allow for grant increases and maintain language that requires the Administration to give the Legislature 75 days' advance notice before reducing benefits or imposing new limits on program eligibility.

9. Increase funding for other important housing programs serving extremely low-income households.

- **Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP, Line Item 7004-9030)**: Increase funding to \$30 million in FY26 to provide additional housing subsidies to individuals under the age of 60 who are living with disabilities.
- **Public Housing Operating Subsidies (Line Item 7004-9005)**: Increase funding to \$153 million for state public housing operating subsidies in FY26 to improve and preserve affordable housing opportunities for Massachusetts households, including extremely low-income families with children, older adults, and people with disabilities, and to serve additional households.
- **Shelter and Services for Unaccompanied Adults (Line Item 7004-0102)**: Provide adequate funding of at least \$110.7 million for shelter, rehousing resources, and services for unaccompanied adults experiencing homelessness.
- **Home and Healthy for Good Program for Individuals (HHG, Line Item 7004-0104)**: Provide \$9.9 million for HHG in FY26 and continue to provide dedicated support to LGBTQ+ young adults experiencing homelessness.

10. Provide \$5 million to expand the access to counsel program for low-income renters and homeowners in the eviction process (Line Item 0321-1800).

- Expand the access to counsel program for low-income tenants facing eviction and certain low-income owner-occupants of 1- to 3-family homes seeking possession of a unit in their only home. The program is funded in FY25 for \$2.5 million.
- Eligible households would receive full legal representation in court or through their administrative proceedings.
- As reported by the Massachusetts Trial Court in February 2024, only 3.5% of tenants have legal representation in Housing Court, as compared to 90% of landlords, leading to housing loss and poorer outcomes for tenants.

11. Provide adequate funding for the transportation of children and youth experiencing homelessness to decrease the costs to cities and towns (Line Item 7035-0008).

- Continue to provide at least \$28.7 million in line item 7035-0008 under the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to reimburse cities and towns for the transportation of students experiencing homelessness.
- This program serves students who are experiencing homelessness, including students staying in shelters, hotels, double-up situations, and other temporary locations.

For more information, please contact the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless: Kelly Turley, Associate Director, at 781-595-7570 x17 or kelly@mahomeless.org. Please also go to <https://mahomeless.org/current-bill-and-budget-priorities/> to learn more.

- Last updated April 3, 2025