

MASSACHUSETTS FY2016 HOUSE BUDGET ADVOCACY ALERT

As promised, here is the Advocacy Network's response to the FY2016 House Ways and Means (HWM) budget, with recommendations for your advocacy. Thanks, in part, to our persistent support of key programs, there is much to celebrate, and it is important for us to endorse these funding levels so that they are sustained throughout the next steps of the budget process.

Your Advocacy Message (very quick and easy):

The House Ways and Means (HWM) Budget has met, or nearly met, our goals on several issues. It will be important to thank and urge our Representatives to support and protect the HWM Budget funding on the Mass Rental Voucher Program (MRVP line item 7004-9024); Residential Assistance to Families in Transition (RAFT line item 7004-9316); Emergency Assistance (EA line item 7004-0101) and HomeBase (line item 7004-0108). **Call/Email your Representative this week as the House budget is being amended for issuance the week of April 27.**

And please take time to speak up for one or more of these Amendments:

Urge your state representative to co-sponsor and support the following amendments in budget debate. House voting on amendments starts Monday, April 27.

(1) Rep. Marjorie Decker's amendment #642 to the Emergency Assistance language, line item 7004-0101, to allow otherwise eligible homeless families to be placed in shelter when they are *within 24 hours of staying in a place not meant for human habitation*, rather than AFTER they have stayed in an unsafe place.

(2) Rep. Marjorie Decker's amendment #639 to HomeBASE, (HB) line item 7004-0108, to allow families to re-access HomeBASE in 12 months following their termination from the program (currently 24 months are required).

(3) Rep. Sannicandro's amendment #35 increasing funding for Adult Basic Education, line item #7035-0002, to \$35 million.

(4) Rep. O'Day's amendment #1031 increasing funding for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth by \$2.5M for housing in line item 7004-0099, and amendment #1033 by \$1.5M in EOHHS administrative account line item 4000-0300 for support services.

Reasons for Needed Advocacy:

(a) MRVP: housing vouchers provide cost effective, long term housing stability to families, disabled, and seniors. MRVP helps families leave shelter, thus reducing record numbers of homeless families in shelters or motels.

(b): No family should have to sleep in a place unfit for human habitation before becoming eligible to enter shelter. See amendment (1) above.

(c) HomeBASE assistance helps families with costs of staying housed and others to leave shelter to enter and stay in rental homes. With increasing, high rents in urban communities, the HWM Budget for HomeBASE assistance of \$8000/year will help families leaving shelter.

(d) Adult Basic Education (ABE) ABE is vital for adults who need a high school credential (e.g., GED) to be eligible for training programs, higher education and better job opportunities. 18,500 adults are currently on ABE waiting lists.

(e) There were over 4000 **unaccompanied homeless youth** in Mass., needing housing and services, in a recent survey of Mass. school-age students.

Your call to your representative will make a difference!

**TO FIND CONTACT INFO FOR YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE SIMPLY
USE: Ctrl+CLICK ON <http://www.mass.gov/legis/> or see attached file - or go
to www.wheredoivotema.com**

**Thanks to the *Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness* for
*preparing this information!***

Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness
<http://www.endfamilyhomelessness.net>