

MASSACHUSETTS FY2016 SENATE BUDGET ADVOCACY ALERT

Dear Fellow Member of *The Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness*:

Here is your Advocacy Network's response to the FY2016 Senate Ways and Means (SWM) budget, with recommendations for your advocacy. The SWM Budget clearly reflects a growing awareness of homelessness in Massachusetts. Below are amendments that support our highest budget priorities. Please call or email your senator Monday or Tuesday to urge their co-sponsorship and support of these amendments. Voting starts this Tuesday, 5/19, and will end this Friday, 5/22, or sooner.

Your Advocacy Messages are in blue. (Additional information on advocacy issues follows):

•End Family Homelessness Fund (line item 1599-0017)

Urge support of amendment #798 that increases funding from \$7M in SWM back to \$20 million, as proposed in the Governor's Budget, and support amendment #849 which specifies this fund to be used by DHCD for family homelessness prevention, diversion, and stabilization

•Mass Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) line item 7004-9024

The SWM Committee has allocated \$85.4 million, a \$20.4 million increase from the FY'15 direct allocation. Urge support of amendment #446 that increases MRVP funding to \$92 million by allowing the carryover of funds from FY2015.

•Residential Assistance to Families in Transition (RAFT) line item 7004-9316

The SWM Committee allocates \$12 million, a \$1 million increase over FY2015, matching the House appropriation.

Urge support of amendment #356 to increase RAFT funding to \$13 million.

•HomeBASE line item 7004-0108

Urge support of amendment #422 that would increase HomeBASE funding to \$33 million and also expand access to HomeBASE beyond shelter families to include families with domestic violence and families in residential treatment centers.

•Adult Basic Education (ABE) line item 7035-0002

Urge support of amendment #604 that would increase ABE funding to \$35.3 million.

And please take time to endorse these changes in the SWM budget:

•New Shelter Eligibility Language! Line item 7004-0101

No amendment is necessary, but please speak in support of this important change in language around access to shelters.

•Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness line item 4000-0007 funded at \$2 million!!!!

No amendment is needed, but please voice your support for this new program that provides housing and wrap-around services for homeless youth through the age of 24.

Additional Information on Advocacy Issues:

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.

RAFT: Provides up to \$4,000 to a family to make it possible for them to stay in their home.

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

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.

Shelter Eligibility: For several years, the ANEFH has sought to change existing language that requires families to first spend a night in a place not fit for human habitation before gaining access to shelter. The SWM Committee has proposed the following change:

"provided further, however, that a family who has no other feasible accommodation on the date of application for assistance and who would otherwise spend the night in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including but not limited to a car, park, abandoned building, medical facility, bus or train station, airport or camping ground, shall be eligible for assistance."

Unaccompanied Youth: There were over 4000 unaccompanied homeless youth in Mass., needing housing and services, in a recent survey of Mass. school-age students.

A call to your senator, as soon as possible this week of 5/18, will make a difference!

TO FIND CONTACT INFO FOR YOUR STATE SENATOR SIMPLY USE: Ctrl+CLICK
on <http://www.mass.gov/legis/> or go to www.wheredoivotema.com, or open the attached **State Senator Contact Info** file.

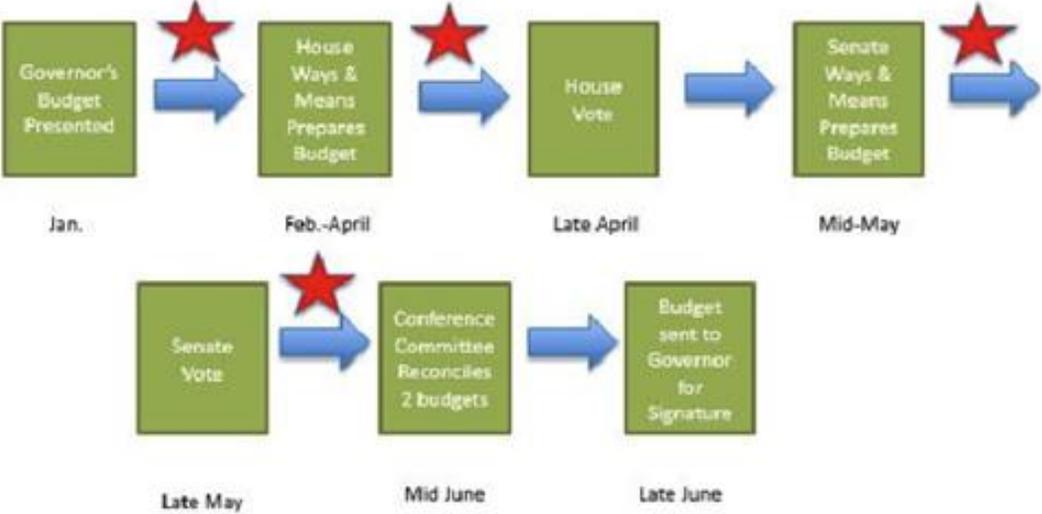
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The State Budget Process
July 1 to June 30



★ = Point of Advocacy