

# Key Budget Priorities for Addressing Family Homelessness, FY2019 (2/18)

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## **Address the Need for Housing**

### **MASSACHUSETTS RENTAL VOUCHER PROGRAM (7004-9024)**

The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) provides housing stability to more than 8,000 extremely low-income households in Massachusetts; including elders, disabled individuals, and families with children. Full restoration of funding to its level in the early 1990s of \$120 million will provide approximately 1,000 new MRVP vouchers, improve MRVP's effectiveness, and reduce the amount of time it takes for voucher holders to obtain housing while preserving housing affordability in units impacted by expiring use and at risk of converting to market rate.

#### FY19 RECOMMENDATION:

- **Fund MRVP at \$120M** to maintain current vouchers provide for approximately 1,000 new vouchers;
- **Improve MRVP's effectiveness** and better align the program with the current rental market; and
- **Preserve housing affordability** in units impacted by expiring use and at risk of converting to market rate.

## **Protect the Safety Net of Shelter**

### **EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE SHELTER (7004-0101)**

The state's Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter system currently provides shelter, housing search, and stabilization services to families that meet strict eligibility criteria. The program is currently serving approximately 3,600 families, including over 6,000 children.

#### FY19 RECOMMENDATION:

- **Fund EA at \$160.6M**, allowing for 12-month contracts with shelter providers, reducing the likelihood of requiring supplemental funding during the fiscal year;
- **Protect children** by ensuring fair "front door" policies and increase assessment and triage, prevention and diversion efforts;
- **Support work and address the cliff effect** for families in shelter, by not applying the income eligibility cap unless a household maintains the income for a period of 90 days or more; and
- **Maintain technical assistance language.**

## **Improve Tool for Diversion/Rapid Re-housing**

### **HOMEBASE (7004-0108)**

HomeBASE provides one pathway out of shelter and a useful tool to assist certain families in entirely avoiding having to enter shelter at all. HomeBASE provides up to \$8,000 of financial support per household, over a 12 month period, to assist in securing alternative housing to shelter. Currently HomeBASE is limited to families residing in Emergency Assistance (EA), or as a diversion tool to the EA program (7004-0101), and as a pilot with families in other shelter programs.

#### FY19 RECOMMENDATION:

- **Increase funding for HomeBASE to \$35M** to allow program expansion;
- **Prevent returns to homelessness** by allowing families to renew HomeBASE if they would otherwise need to re-enter shelter; and
- **Continue to ensure access** to families residing in domestic violence shelters, residential treatment, and sober living programs.