

Primary Budget Priorities for Addressing Family Homelessness, FY2018 (3/10/17)



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 1,500 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.

FY18 RECOMMENDATION:

- **Restore funding to MRVP at \$120M** to provide for approximately 1,500 new vouchers;
- **Improve MRVP's effectiveness** and reduce the amount of time it takes for voucher holders to obtain housing;
- **Reduce cliff effects** by adopting the Governor's proposal to increase the income cap from 50% to 80% of the area median income; 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 3,500 families, including 3,059 children age 5 and under and 3,589 children age 6-18.

FY18 RECOMMENDATION:

- **Fund EA at \$164.7M**, 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;
- **Require the state to improve its data collection** by inserting language that would require the Department of Housing and Community Development to report the reasons families are denied access to shelter, as well as basic demographics, income, and the ages of impacted children; and
- **Maintain Playspace & technical assistance language.**

Prevention/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), as a diversion tool to the EA program (7004-0101), and as a pilot with families in other shelter programs.

FY18 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;
- **Align program rules** with EA by reducing the 24 month bar to 12 months, and
- **Continue to ensure access** to families residing in domestic violence shelters, residential treatment, and sober living programs.