

Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness FY20 Budget Requests

Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (7004-9024): \$130 million to maintain existing services and benefits to households currently being served by the program and to increase the number of households served. This would be a \$30 million increase over both the FY19 funding level and the Governor's proposed FY20 funding level and is critical to address the affordable housing crisis that underlies housing instability. Also *include language to tie rent subsidy levels to current fair market rents (FMR) so that subsidies can be utilized.* Currently, households without waivers only can rent units at or below the 2005 FMR for their area.

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) (70094-9316): \$27 million, allocating the increase of \$7 million from FY19 to **pilot the Rent Arrearage Assistance Program (RAAP)** to provide upstream homelessness prevention resources for those who have fallen behind on rent but not yet entered eviction proceedings. (**See H.1264, an Act to further provide a rental arrearage program**). This additional resource will prevent unnecessary loss of housing and stabilize households.

Homeless Individuals Assistance (7004-0102 & 7004-0202): \$55 million in line item 7004-0102, a \$7 million increase from FY19 and the Governor's FY20 budget. Last year's budget of \$48.18 million still amounted to an inflation-adjusted decline of 6.3% since 2001, only covering 61% of the true cost of DHCD-contracted shelter beds. **Also support \$5 million in line-item 7004-0202 to continue the rapid transition of homeless individuals into permanent housing.**

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (4000-0007): \$5 million, a 1.7 million increase over both the FY19 budget and the Governor's FY20 budget, to better meet the critical housing and service needs for youth ages 18-24 years experiencing homelessness. Research indicates that 1 in 10 youth aged 18-24 experience a form of homelessness over a 12-month period. Because young adulthood represents a key developmental window, every day of housing instability represents missed opportunities to support healthy development and transitions to productive adulthood.

Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs) (7004-3036): \$4 million, an increase of \$1 million from the FY19 budget and the Governor's FY20 budget. HCECs are the front line for housing crisis response in the Commonwealth, funding core staff and access to other resources such as homelessness prevention, housing search assistance and foreclosure prevention counseling. HCECs see well over 1,700 households each month that are at risk of homelessness or seeking shelter.

Secure Jobs Initiative (SJI) (4400-1020): \$2 million, a \$1 million increase from the FY19 budget and the Governor's FY20 budget. SJI has been critical in reducing the number of families in the Emergency Assistance shelter system and reducing the return to shelter rate by supporting heads of households on their path to employment and higher wages. SJI in Western Massachusetts alone has employed 650 individuals since 2013 with 88% employment retention and 90% housing retention.

Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) (7004-3045): \$1.3 million, level-funding consistent with FY19 budget and Governor's FY20 budget. This program preserves tenancies for individuals and families who are facing eviction as a result of behavior in the household related to a disability. TPP prevents homelessness for 90% of households statewide.

Alternative Housing Voucher Program (7004-9030): \$8 million, an increase from \$6.15 million in both the FY19 budget and the Governor's FY20 budget, to provide access to affordable housing for non-elderly disabled individuals, a population that is most at risk for becoming chronically homeless.

Regional Transit Authorities (RTA) (1593-6370): The Task Force on the Regional Transit Authority Performance and Funding just released its draft report on March 13, 2019. **It recommends funding RTAs at \$90.5 million and installing an annual inflator so those funds would increase predictably to account for inflation.** The FY19 budget included a total of \$88 million; the Governor's FY20 budget proposes a total of \$86 million. Access to public transportation plays a critical role in ending homelessness, especially in the geographic expanse of Western Massachusetts. The Network strongly encourages adoption of the Task Force recommendations.

One-Stop Career Centers (7003-0803) \$6.5 million, a \$2.44 million increase from the FY19 budget and the Governor's FY20 budget, to maintain current service levels to job seekers. This request has the support of the Massachusetts Workforce Association and The Workforce Solutions Group. If federal funding to Career Centers decreases at the same rate as FY17-19, the funding gap to maintain baseline services would be \$10 million.

Adult Basic Education/ESOL (7035-0002): \$38.1 million, an increase from \$33.35 in the FY19 budget and \$37.62 in the Governor's FY20 budget, to help move hundreds of people off of wait lists into programs and ultimately jobs and greater housing stability.

Western Region-Specific Requests:

Craig's Doors Shelter (7004-0102): The Governor's proposed FY20 budget includes funding of \$175,000 for Craig's Doors for the first time. This amount is level with FY19 funding but below its initial funding of \$200,000. **Craig's Doors seeks funding of \$250,000** to be equipped to provide emergency winter shelter, case management and re-housing services to homeless individuals across the region. Craig's Doors is the only explicitly behavior-based shelter in the Upper Pioneer Valley and serves roughly 200 individuals annually in the shelter alone.

Berkshire County Winter Overflow Shelter Collaboration (7004-0102): \$150,000 to continue the now 5-year collaboration, including ServiceNet, Family Life, Inc.(Louison House), Construct, Inc., SoldierOn and Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority to provide winter shelter beds and supportive services. This program serves over 150 homeless Berkshire County individuals annually.

Western MA Network to End Homelessness (7004-0107): \$125,000 to continue the implementation of Housing First across the region, facilitating the coordination and collaboration necessary to make homelessness across Western Massachusetts rare, brief and non-recurring.