



## It's Gone Too Far

### Adopt the Senate Version of the Emergency Assistance Line Item (7004-0101) to Protect Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness from Having to Sleep in Unsafe Places

#### The Problem:

Many families with children experiencing homelessness are forced to sleep in cars, bus stations, and other unsafe places before they are admitted into shelter.

- Based on the state's own data, almost **500 families with children** had to sleep in cars, bus stations, emergency rooms and other unsafe places in FY15 (July 2014 and June 2015) *before* they were found eligible for emergency shelter through the state's Emergency Assistance (EA) program. In the first 10 months of FY16, another **535 families** were approved for EA only after staying in such dire circumstances.
- Families are showing up at hospital clinics and emergency rooms **with no other safe place to sleep**, which in turn drives up health care costs. Educators across the state are expressing concern about the fate of their students whose educations are being disrupted as their families search for a safe place to sleep.
- This crisis is due to onerous shelter eligibility restrictions imposed by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in September 2012. Under these regulations, in December 2015, at least 50% of the families who applied for shelter were denied.

**The Simple Solution:** Adopt the Senate language in line item 7004-0101 to allow otherwise eligible families to be placed in shelter before they have to stay in a place not meant for human habitation, not just *after* they have stayed there. (See over).

#### The Cost:

Less than \$300,000 per year.

- Based on DHCD's own numbers, we estimate that approximately **600-700 families** per year will first have to stay in places not meant for human habitation before getting shelter if this new language is not adopted.
- If each of these families got placed in shelter one night earlier to avoid this fate, **the cost to the Commonwealth would be only about \$70,000 per year**. Even if they received shelter three nights earlier, the cost would be only **\$210,000 per year**.
- DHCD's own data shows that many of these families are getting into shelter now – but only after sleeping in unfit places. It's gone too far.

**Protect Children Experiencing Homelessness in the FY'17 State Budget:  
Actively Support the Adoption of Senate Language in the Conference Committee  
Budget to Provide Shelter to Families with Children Who Are Within 24 Hours of  
Staying in Places Not Meant for Human Habitation**

For more information, contact the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless (Kelly Turley, 781-595-7570 x17 or [kelly@mahomeless.org](mailto:kelly@mahomeless.org)) or Boston Children's Hospital (Kate Audette, 617-919-3062 or [Kathryn.Audette@childrens.harvard.edu](mailto:Kathryn.Audette@childrens.harvard.edu).)

## **Senate Language to Protect Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness**

### **Within Line Item 7004-0101**

“...provided further, that temporary emergency assistance shall be provided to families who on the date of application for emergency assistance have no other feasible alternative housing, as defined in 760 CMR 67.06.1(b), and who, but for not having spent 1 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, would be eligible for emergency assistance under clauses (i), (ii), (iii) or (iv);”