Dear friend,

Yesterday, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) issued proposed regulations for the Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter and services program. If implemented, these changes will dramatically reduce access to the shelter safety net for children and families who are experiencing homelessness. The changes are set to take effect 60 days after the notice, unless Governor Patrick and/or Legislature intervene to stop these new inhumane rules from being implemented.

As you may recall, the final fiscal year 2013 budget directs DHCD to provide shelter to at least all families who fall into four categories described by the Legislature. The legislative language provides the Administration with the discretion to provide shelter to additional families as well, as long as those eligible include those in the delineated four categories. The Coalition is extremely disappointed to see that DHCD has chosen to only provide shelter to families that fit into their very narrow interpretation of the Legislature's categories. If implemented, DHCD’s proposed regulations will leave thousands of children and families in very unsafe situations.

We need your help to push back against these proposed regulation changes by weighing in as soon as possible with Governor Patrick and with your State Representative and State Senator! Your voice can help convince lawmakers that these proposed changes are dangerous and immoral.

Please see below for more details and action steps. Your advocacy is needed now more than ever!

Thank you!

-Kelly Turley
Director of Legislative Advocacy
kelly@mahomeless.org
781-595-7570 x17

DHCD’s Proposed Regulation Changes to Limit Families’ Access to Shelter

DHCD’s notice to the Legislature of their intended EA eligibility restrictions and program changes included many draft documents, outlining their vision of what the EA program will look like and how such changes will be implemented. All of the documents have been posted on the Coalition’s website. Please [click here](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=7x9f7cbab&v=001...1 of 3 7/18/2012 4:33 PM) to access them.

Through the [FY’13 budget](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=7x9f7cbab&v=001...1 of 3 7/18/2012 4:33 PM), the Legislature directed DHCD to, at a minimum, provide shelter to families who are experiencing homelessness:

1. Due to domestic violence; or
2. Due to fire, flood, or natural disaster, if not caused by the family; or
3. After going through certain no fault evictions; or

[Follow us on twitter](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=7x9f7cbab&v=001...1 of 3 7/18/2012 4:33 PM) | [Join Our Mailing List!](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=7x9f7cbab&v=001...1 of 3 7/18/2012 4:33 PM)

**Please take action!** Patrick Administration proposes dramatic new emergency assistance regulations to restrict access to family shelter.
4. Facing substantial health and safety risks in their double-up situation or are staying in a place not meant for human habitation

The Coalition is shocked and saddened to see that DHCD has chosen such an extreme interpretation of this line item language— and we do not believe that these regulations will meet the legislative intent. Based on the documents released yesterday, if the changes are implemented, DHCD would be able to exclude from shelter families who:

- Are staying in places not meant for human habitation, but where there is heat, electricity, running water, and a toilet (such a hospital emergency room, police station, or train station)
- Have been evicted for purely “no fault” reasons, such as cases where the property owner evicts the family because she/he wants to move into the families’ rental unit or is looking to sell the building
- Are living in unsafe situations, but are unable to meet the new overly burdensome verification requirements
- Have no place to go after being kicked out by a former host/family member if the the conditions in that unit did not pose significant health and safety risks
- Are currently separated from one another in order to find temporary shelter, if the child could continue to find alternative housing without the parent or guardian. Families could be denied if the parent (but not child) is staying in a car or tent, or if the child is an unsafe situation that could potentially be remedied.
- And many, many others

Next Steps

Please call Governor Deval Patrick to:

1.) Let him know that you are disturbed that DHCD is choosing to deny shelter to so many children and families who are experiencing homelessness.

2.) Ask him to re-examine the proposed regulations, and use his power to amend them to better protect children and families truly in need of Emergency Assistance.

3.) Let him know that you believe Massachusetts must simultaneously invest in housing, homelessness prevention, and safety net resources.

The Governor’s office can be reached by phone at 1-888-870-7770. Additional contact information can be found here. If you are on Twitter, please see the sample tweet in the sidebar.

Please also contact your State Representative and State Senator to ask them to speak to Leadership (Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo and Senate President Therese Murray) to:

1.) Express their concern over the proposed Emergency Assistance regulations that will leave thousands of children and families in unsafe situations.

2.) Ask Leadership to include language in the pending supplemental budget request to stop these detrimental and inhumane changes, or take other similar action to reject the proposed changes.

Legislators can be reached through the State House switchboard at 617-722-2000, or you can go here to search for your elected officials based on your address.

Thank you for your advocacy and support!

For more information, please contact Kelly Turley at 781-595-7570 x17. 

http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=7x9f7cbab&v=001...
* As noted in our last alert, the Governor filed a supplemental budget request on July 8th, which included a recommendation for additional funds to address family homelessness in FY'13. He asked for $15 million more for the Emergency Assistance family shelter and services line item, 7004-0101. If approved, this would bring EA shelter and motel funding up to $111.7 million, still significantly lower than the FY'12 funding level of $137.5 million. This request provides an opportunity for Legislators to provide additional guidance to DHCD on legislative intent regarding access to shelter for families experiencing homelessness.

mchalert
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless

Please join us in raising money to help end homelessness, just by searching the Internet or shopping online with GoodSearch.

GoodSearch for the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless by following this link: http://www.goodsearch.com/?charityid=849550.

Forward email

This email was sent to emailalert@mahomeless.org by kelly@mahomeless.org | Update Profile/Email Address | Instant removal with SafeUnsubscribe™ | Privacy Policy.

Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless | 15 Bubier St. | Lynn | MA | 01901