



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

# LEGISLATIVE ACTION DAY

 Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home.

## Media Advisory: Important Legislative Action Day This Thursday on Key Homelessness and Housing Issues at the State House

**WHAT:** The Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless (“the Coalition”) will hold its annual [Legislative Action Day](#) this Thursday, February 27th at the State House. The event will mobilize more than 200 families, youth, and adults experiencing homelessness, advocates, providers, legislative cosponsors, and allies to take action in support of key legislative and budgetary campaigns on homelessness and housing issues. The day also will provide an opportunity for legislators, their staff, and the public to learn more about the Coalition’s work to prevent and end homelessness in the Commonwealth. State Representative Jim O’Day (D-West Boylston), the House Chair of the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, will be hosting Legislative Action Day, and Diane Yentel, President and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, will provide the keynote address.

A main area of focus will be the Coalition’s campaign to increase access to standard-issue Mass ID cards for people experiencing homelessness, currently Senate Bill 2555/House Bill 3066. The bill, originally filed by Senator Harriette Chandler of Worcester and Representative Kay Khan of Newton, would remove cost burdens and excessive verification barriers for people experiencing homelessness when they apply for Massachusetts identification cards through the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Passage and implementation of the bill would allow people experiencing homelessness to more easily apply for jobs, enroll in education programs, get a library card, pick up a package from the post office, open a financial account, enter certain government buildings, and access services. Without a fee waiver, Mass ID cards cost \$25/each, which is cost-prohibitive for many youth and adults without homes. **The Senate version of the bill is scheduled to come up for a vote on Thursday.**

Another top priority for participants is the Coalition’s ongoing campaign to permanently re-establish a statewide rental arrearage program by passing An Act to Further Provide a Rental Arrearage Program, House Bill 1264. The bill, filed by Representative Marjorie Decker of Cambridge, recently was reported out favorably by the Joint Committee on Housing and is awaiting its next committee assignment. The rent arrearage bill was cosponsored by 71 other legislators, and currently has been endorsed by 138 organizations across the Commonwealth. The Coalition also has been leading the related budget campaign that was behind successful efforts to create a \$7 million pilot program in the current fiscal year to begin to provide upstream homelessness prevention resources to households that have fallen behind on rent or mortgage payments, but are not yet in the eviction or foreclosure process. This program is called Upstream RAFT, and is part of the larger Residential Assistance for Families in Transition homelessness prevention program (RAFT, line item 7004-9316). Advocates are calling for continued funding and support for Upstream RAFT in FY’21.

Participants also will focus on increasing state funding for housing and wraparound services for unaccompanied youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness (line item 4000-0007) from \$5 million in FY’20 to \$8 million for FY’21. An \$8 million investment would provide deeper funding for the unaccompanied youth homelessness law, M.G.L. Chapter 6A, Sections 16W and 16X, and better serve and partner with youth and young adults age 24 and younger who are without homes. Funds would be used for housing, wraparound services, and supports for young people experiencing homelessness without a parent or guardian, and to continue the work to build up regional Youth Action Boards, comprised of young people with lived experience of homelessness.

In addition, the Coalition and allies also will push for increased funds and improvements to critical programs such as the Emergency Assistance family shelter and services program (EA, line item 7004-0101), Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP, line item 7004-9024 and House Bill 1305/Senate Bill 797), the Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children program (EAEDC, line item 4408-1000 and House Bill 621/Senate Bill 356), and the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (line item 7004-9030). The group also will ask lawmakers to pass legislation to create a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness (House Bill 1314/Senate Bill 816), better uphold the safety, dignity, and civil rights of people experiencing homelessness (House Bill 150/Senate Bill 76), ensure that tenants have legal counsel in eviction

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proceedings (House Bill 3456/Senate Bill 913), and lift participants in the state's cash assistance programs out of deep poverty (House Bill 102/Senate Bill 36).

**WHO:** Scheduled speakers include:

- Diane Yentel, President and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and keynote speaker
- Representative Jim O'Day, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, lead sponsor of An Act Relative to Assisting Elders and People with Disabilities in the Commonwealth (a.k.a. the EAEDC bill), lead sponsor of youth homelessness budget amendments, and sponsor of Legislative Action Day
- Senate President Emerita Harriette Chandler, Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Bills in the Third Reading, Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing, and lead sponsor of An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families
- Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities and Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Cannabis Policy
- Senator Sal DiDomenico, Assistant Majority Leader, Chair of the Senate Committee on Bills in the Third Reading, and lead sponsor of An Act to Lift Kids Out of Deep Poverty and An Act to Ensure Right to Counsel in Eviction Proceedings
- Senator Becca Rausch, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs, and lead sponsor of An Act Providing a Bill of Rights for People Experiencing Homelessness and An Act Relative to the Safety, Dignity, and Civil Rights of Persons Experiencing Homelessness
- Representative Marjorie Decker, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use, and Recovery, and lead sponsor of An Act to Further Provide a Rental Arrearage Program, An Act to Protect Families Experiencing Homelessness from Having to Sleep in Unsafe Places, and An Act to Reduce Deep Poverty among Kids
- Representative Kevin Honan, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Housing
- Representative Kay Khan, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities, and lead sponsor of An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families
- Representative Denise Provost, lead sponsor of An Act to End Child Homelessness
- Maia Raynor, Legislative Aide, Office of Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz
- Shamika Bowens, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program
- Kaytie Holbrook, Facilitator, Boston Youth Action Board
- Marybeth Worden, Member, Worcester Fellowship
- Program Participant, Lynn Shelter Association
- Program Participant, Greater Boston Legal Services
- Naomi Meyer, Attorney, Greater Boston Legal Services
- Andrea Park, Attorney, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
- Dr. Amanda Stewart, M.D., Boston Pediatrician
- Marwa Sayed, Community Organizer/Legislative Advocate, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
- Kelly Turley, Associate Director, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless

**WHEN:** Thursday, February 27, 2020, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.; with speaking portion 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and legislative visits 1:00–3:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** Massachusetts State House, Great Hall, Second Floor

**WHY:** Across the Commonwealth, thousands of households are experiencing homelessness and/or struggling with housing instability. Concrete action can and should be taken at the state level to promote homelessness prevention, housing stability, human rights, and human dignity. As the House and Senate develop their FY'21 budget proposals and debate pending legislation during the 2019-2020 legislative session, the Coalition and allies seek to elevate key homelessness and housing solutions.

**HOW:** For interviews, please contact Kelly Turley at [kelly@mahomeless.org](mailto:kelly@mahomeless.org) or 617-652-0472 (cell). Please also find resources at [www.mahomeless.org/advocacy/item/legislative-action-day-2020](http://www.mahomeless.org/advocacy/item/legislative-action-day-2020).

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