



**MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS**

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

## **Please Actively Support Key Homelessness, Housing, and Benefits Bills in the Final Months of the 2019-2020 Legislative Session**

We hope that you can support critical legislation related to homelessness, housing, and benefits by actively supporting the bills listed below and on this longer list: <http://tinyurl.com/bills20192020>. Please also take the opportunity to sign on still to Senate-filed bills.

### **Top Bill Priority Campaigns**

#### **- Formalize the state's re-establishment of the upstream rental arrearage benefits to help more households (families, youth, elders, people with disabilities, et al.) avoid homelessness**

- Lead Sponsor: Representative Marjorie Decker
- Bill Name: An Act to further provide a rental arrearage program
- Bill Number: House Bill 1264
- This bill would put the new Upstream RAFT component of the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition program in state statute under the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Upstream RAFT allows access to back rent/back mortgage resources before a household has begun the eviction/foreclosure process. Eligible households can qualify for funding to cover up to 4 months' back rent or back mortgage payments. Traditional RAFT benefits only are available later in the eviction and foreclosure processes.

#### **- Ensure that families experiencing homelessness do not have to stay in a place not meant for human habitation before being eligible for Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter and services**

- Lead Sponsor: Representative Marjorie Decker
- Bill Name: An Act to protect families experiencing homelessness from having to sleep in unsafe places
- Bill Number: House Bill 1265
- Over 4,100 families have stayed in places not meant for human habitation before later being approved for shelter since a misguided policy was implemented in 2012 requiring many families to do so. FY'20 budget language has begun to undo this policy, but implementation has been inconsistent.

#### **- Ease access to standard Massachusetts ID cards for people experiencing homelessness by eliminating the \$25 fee and allowing alternative ways to verify Massachusetts residency without requiring a permanent address**

- Lead Sponsors: Senator Harriette Chandler and Representative Kay Khan
- Bill Name: An Act to provide identification to homeless youth and families
- Bill Numbers: Senate Bill 2555 (previously 2043) and House Bill 3066
- This bill would allow access to standard Mass IDs, not REAL ID Act-compliant Mass IDs, for which residents must provide additional verifications that meet federal standards.

#### **- Improve the Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children program (EAEDC)**

- Lead Sponsors: Senator Pat Jehlen and Representative Jim O'Day
- Bill Name: An Act relative to assisting elders and people with disabilities in the Commonwealth
- Bill Numbers: Senate Bill 356 and House Bill 621.
- This bill would put the recent removal of the EAEDC homelessness penalty into statute, increase monthly grant levels, provide an annual cost of living adjustment, and increase the program's asset limit from \$250 to \$2,500.

(Continued on the back)

**73 Buffum Street, Lynn, MA 01902**  
**781-595-7570**  
**[www.mahomeless.org](http://www.mahomeless.org)**

**- Establish a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness**

- Lead Sponsors: Senator Becca Rausch and Representative Smitty Pignatelli
- Bill Name: An Act providing a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness
- Bill Numbers: Senate Bill 816 and House Bill 1314; very similar legislation also was filed by Senator Nick Collins, Senate Bill 784
- This bill would be a statement of legislative intent, recognizing and affirming various rights of people experiencing homelessness, such as the right to move freely in public spaces, the right to confidentiality of records, the right to privacy of property, the right to register to vote and to vote, etc.

**- Promote the safety, dignity, and civil rights of people experiencing homelessness**

- Lead Sponsors: Senator Becca Rausch and Representative Liz Miranda
- Bill Name: An Act relative to the safety, dignity, and civil rights of persons experiencing homelessness
- Bill Numbers: Senate Bill 76 and House Bill 150
- This bill would build on the work to decrease discrimination and to establish a bill of rights (see above), and would provide additional civil rights protections for people experiencing homelessness. The bill would affirm the right to rest, eat, pray, and be in public spaces by amending the Commonwealth's public spaces laws (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 45), amend the Commonwealth's voting laws to affirm the right to register to vote without a permanent address (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 50, Section 1), amend the Commonwealth's anti-discrimination laws to include housing status (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 151B), and repeal archaic sections of Massachusetts General Laws regarding so-called "tramps", "vagrants", and "vagabonds" (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 272, Sections 63-69).

**- Establish a right to counsel for tenants in eviction proceedings**

- Lead Sponsors: Senator Sal DiDomenico and Representative Chynah Tyler
- Bill Name: An Act to ensure right to counsel in eviction proceedings
- Bill Numbers: Senate Bill 913 and House Bill 3456
- This bill seeks to level the playing field to ensure that tenants have representation in court when facing evictions. Without legal representation, many tenants lose their housing and are unable to negotiate more favorable settlements with their landlords.

**- Increase economic security and dignity for families with children, elders, people with disabilities, and unaccompanied youth participating in state-funded cash assistance programs**

- Lead Sponsors: Senator Sal DiDomenico and Representative Marjorie Decker
- Bill Names: An Act to lift children out of deep poverty/An Act relative to well-being and care of a child
- Bill Numbers: Senate Bill 36 and House Bill 102
- This bill seeks to increase Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC) cash assistance benefits each year to bring benefits up to and beyond the deep poverty level (50% of the official federal poverty level).

See our full list of bill priorities here: <http://tinyurl.com/bills20192020>

**Please actively support these critical homelessness, housing, and benefits bills today!**

Thank you for your support and collaboration to address and end homelessness for families, individuals, and youth across the Commonwealth.

For more information, please contact the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless:  
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