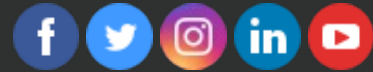


[View as a web page](#)

[View our advocacy page](#)



**MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS**

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home



July 22, 2019

Greetings!

As the old saying goes, good things come to those who wait. Yesterday, the FY'20 Budget Conference Committee members\* [released their budget](#)

[recommendations](#), three weeks into FY'20. Today, the House voted 159-0 to accept the committee's \$43.1 billion in recommendations. The Senate also is scheduled to vote on the budget today. The budget then [will head to Governor Charlie Baker's desk for him to sign the budget and issue vetoes](#).

We are grateful for all of your collaboration and advocacy to ensure the Conference Committee budget was as strong as possible on homelessness, housing, and benefits issues. See Chairperson Michlewitz's [Twitter post](#) below, noting the historic investments in housing and homelessness programs.

***Highlights from the Conference Committee's budget:***

- The Conference Committee adopted language similar to that proposed by the Senate for the Emergency Assistance family shelter program to ensure that children and families do not have to stay in places not meant for human habitation before accessing shelter. **After nearly seven years, this failed policy is on course to be repealed!**

The committee also adopted the Senate-proposed funding level of \$178.7 million, which is \$13 million more than the House-proposed level (EA, line item 7004-0101).

As noted previously, both the House and Senate budgets would allow families to retain shelter benefits while increasing their incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty guidelines (before the existing grace period would begin). As anticipated, this language remained in the Conference Committee budget.

- The Conference Committee adopted Senate-proposed funding of \$5 million for housing and wraparound services for unaccompanied youth and young adults experiencing homelessness (line item 4000-0007), which is \$1.7 million more than both the House-proposed level and the FY'19 appropriation.
- The Conference Committee adopted Senate-proposed funding of \$21 million for the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition homelessness prevention program (RAFT, line item 7004-9316), which is \$1 million more than the House-proposed level and the FY'19 appropriation.

**While it is not spelled out in the budget language, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has agreed to pilot an upstream rent arrearage program through the RAFT line item, very similar to what we have been pushing for in our budget and bill campaigns.** \$4.7 million has been set aside this year to help households who have fallen behind on their rent, but have not yet gone to court for eviction. See page 4 of [DHCD's new RAFT administrative plan for FY'20](#) (PDF).

- The Conference Committee adopted House-proposed direct funding of \$110 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP, line item 7004-9024), which is \$6 million more than the Senate-proposed direct appropriation, and Senate-proposed language that would update the allowable monthly rent levels to match current fair market rents for mobile subsidies issued or renewed on or after August 1st and that would carry over up to \$6,000,000 in unspent FY'19 funds.

Here is our [FY'20 budget chart](#), updated with the Conference Committee details and our preliminary analysis of these key line items and others related to homelessness, housing, and benefits (see column P).

***Action Steps:***

**Please join the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless today in**

thanking the conferees and your State Representative and State Senator for supporting key items in the fiscal year 2020 budget so as to prevent and end homelessness among families, unaccompanied youth, and adults. Unsure who your legislators are? You can look them up via [www.wheredoivotema.com](http://www.wheredoivotema.com).

Please also ask the Governor to retain key homelessness, housing, and benefits language and funding (noted above and in the [budget chart](#)) by signing these line items into law. The Governor's contact information can be found on the bottom of this page: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/office-of-the-governor>.

Thanks for your collaboration!

With gratitude and hope,

Kelly Turley  
Associate Director  
[kelly@mahomeless.org](mailto:kelly@mahomeless.org)

\* The six conferees were Senate Ways and Means Chair [Michael Rodrigues](#), Senate Ways and Means Vice Chair [Cindy Friedman](#), Senate Ways and Means Ranking Minority Member [Viriato \(Vinny\) deMacedo](#), House Ways and Means Chair [Aaron Michlewitz](#), House Ways and Means Vice Chair [Denise Garlick](#), and House Ways and Means Ranking Minority Member [Todd Smola](#).



**Aaron Michlewitz** ✓ @RepMichlewitz · 3h

This year's budget represents the biggest increase to Housing & Homelessness seen in a generation, with a \$10M increase in MRVP and a \$5.2M increase in individual shelters. (4/8) #mapoli



1

2

10

