

Housing Solutions Campaign

Action for Boston Community Development

Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness

AIDS Housing Corporation

Asian Community Development Corporation

Boston Tenant Coalition

Central Mass. Housing Alliance

Citizens' Housing and Planning Association

City Life/Vida Urbana

Community Teamwork Inc.

Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries

Crittenton Women's Union

Crossroads Family Shelter

Episcopal City Mission

Family Economic Initiative

Fair Housing Center of Gr. Boston

Franklin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority

Hearth

Home Funders Collaborative

Homes for Families

House of Hope

Housing Families Inc.

Mass. Alliance on Teen Pregnancy

Mass. Association of Community Development Corporations

Mass. Association of Older Americans

Mass. Coalition for the Homeless

Mass. Housing and Shelter Alliance

Mass. Law Reform Institute

Mass. Nonprofit Housing Association

Medford Community Housing

Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership

National Association of Social Workers MA

Neighbor to Neighbor

Pine Street Inn

Project Hope

Rosie's Place

Rural Development Inc.

Shelburne Housing Authority

Somerville Homeless Coalition

Travelers Aid Family Services

Wellspring House

Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development

Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program

The MA Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) provides low income families, elders and persons with disabilities with assistance in paying their rent and helps developers build housing that is affordable to this population.

FY10 BUDGET REQUEST \$35.8 million for MRVP (7004-9024) will:

- Preserve the 5,100 existing homes currently leased with MRVP in a time when more families, elders and people with disabilities are facing the difficulties of rising rents and falling incomes.

THE CHALLENGE:

- **Extremely low income households cannot afford the high cost of rent in Massachusetts.** Households currently enrolled in MRVP have an *average household income of \$958 per month.*¹ Yet, the fair market rent for a *two-bedroom apartment in Massachusetts can be as high as \$1,345.*² Rents are significantly higher than incomes, making housing unaffordable to many.
- **The state's family shelter system is operating beyond capacity.** As a result of our state's high housing costs, over 2,600 families are residing in state-funded shelters, over 650 of which are hotels and motels. The cost to the Commonwealth of sheltering these families averages \$3,510 per month, while the average MRVP voucher cost is less than \$600 per month.
- **Failure to fund MRVP at \$35.8 million could perpetuate our current homelessness crisis.** Funding MRVP at anything below \$35.8 million will force the state to consider taking back vouchers that low income families, elders and persons with disabilities are depending on to maintain their tenancies. Without rental vouchers, these households are likely to fall into homelessness, causing additional strain on the state's extremely costly shelter system.

THE SOLUTION:

Fund MRVP (7004-9024) at \$35.8 million to help low income working families, the disabled, seniors and others experiencing housing uncertainties to avoid entering shelter, providing a cost-effective alternative to shelter that bridges the widening housing affordability gap for low income residents.

SUGGESTED ADJUSTMENTS TO THE PROGRAM:

- Base eligibility for MRVP on area median income (AMI) rather than the federal poverty level (FPL). This change will reflect the differences in rent across the Commonwealth.
- Help stabilize households by allowing participants to keep subsidies until their income increases to the point where they are able to pay their full rent without a subsidy for six months.
- Increase the administrative fee to \$40 per voucher per month, so that administering agencies can pay for the costs of helping households obtain and maintain stable housing.
- Help households gain economic stability by limiting their portion of rent to no more than 35% of their income if utilities are included and 30% of their income if utilities are not included.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Diane Sullivan, Policy Advocate
Homes for Families
14 Beacon Street, Suite 615
Boston, MA 02108
617.227.4188
dsullivan@homesforfamilies.org

¹Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, sample survey, 2005.

²US Department of Housing and Urban Development, October, 2008.

³*Bringing Children in from the Cold*. The Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program & Medical-Legal Partnership for Children at Boston Medical Center. October, 2008

⁴Time Magazine, *Briefing: Low-income Children Left Behind*. December 10, 2007. Full report available at: <http://www.aecf.org/upload/PublicationFiles/lowincomewellbeing.pdf>