



It's Gone Too Far

Ask House and Senate Leadership to Amend the Emergency Assistance Line Item (7004-0101) to Protect Children from Having to Sleep in Unsafe Places

The Problem:

Families with children experiencing homelessness are forced to sleep in cars, bus stations, and other unsafe places before they are admitted into shelter.

- Based on the state's own data, **264 families with children** had to sleep in cars, bus stations, emergency rooms and other unsafe places between July and October 2013 *before* they were found eligible for emergency shelter.
- Families are showing up at hospital clinics and emergency rooms **with no other safe place to sleep**, which in turn drives up health care costs. Educators across the state are expressing concern about the fate of their students whose educations are being disrupted.
- This is due to onerous shelter eligibility restrictions imposed by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in September 2012.

The Simple Solution:

Amend the language in line item 7004-0101 to allow otherwise eligible homeless families to be placed in shelter when they are "within 24 hours of staying in a place not meant for human habitation", not just *after* they have stayed there. (See over.)

The Cost:

Less than \$300,000 per year.

- Based on DHCD's own numbers from July through October 2013, we estimate that approximately **792 families** per year would first have to stay in places not meant for human habitation before getting shelter if this new language were not adopted.
- If each of these families got placed in shelter one night earlier to avoid this fate, **the cost to the Commonwealth would be only about \$79,000 per year**. Even if they received shelter three nights earlier, the cost would be only **\$237,000 per year**.
- DHCD's own data shows that many of these families are getting into shelter now – but only after sleeping in unfit places. It's gone too far.

**Protect Homeless Children in the FY 15 State Budget:
Ask House and Senate Leadership to
Shelter Children and Families Who Are Within 24 Hours of Staying in
Places Not Meant for Human Habitation**

Line Item Language to Protect Homeless Children

Requested new language in bold:

7004-0101 (d) families who are in a housing situation where they are not the primary lease holder or who are in **or within 24 hours of being in** a housing situation not meant for human habitation and where there is **or would be** a substantial health and safety risk to the family that is likely to result in significant harm should the family remain in **or enter** such housing situation; provided further, that the health and safety risk shall be determined by the department of children and families through risk assessments;....