

Network Committee Recommendations FY 17 Budget Priorities

Individual Services

- **Expand Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)**, a homelessness prevention program, to include households of all sizes so as to allow unaccompanied adults, including elders, access to this homelessness prevention resource. RAFT provides assistance of up to \$4,000 in a 12-month period to help families pay security deposits, first and last month's rent and other housing-related expenses. \$18.5 million (an increase from \$12.5 million in FY16) would assist an estimated 6,331 households. The Network's Veterans Committee also supports this priority. *(Statewide support: CHAPA, MA Coalition for the Homeless)*
- **Support an increase in the individual shelter bed rate in collaboration with the statewide Coalition for Homeless Individuals (CHI)**. CHI, which includes all programs funded in the individual services line item, is currently finalizing their FY17 budget request. The Committee seeks support of the CHI agenda to increase shelter bed rates and cost of living increase to other programs. The Western region's shelters have been under-funded relative to the population they serve and this priority would be a continuation of the Network's advocacy to ensure equitable funding to our region.
- **Fund the Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP)**, a homelessness prevention program that works with individuals and families with disabilities facing eviction. With funding of \$975,000 (an increase from \$500,000 in FY16), TPP could provide direct case management services to 200 more households and consultation services for 600 more households. *(Statewide support: CHAPA, MassNAHRO)*

Family Services

- **Support Secure Jobs Funding** pursuant to coordinated statewide advocacy. Secure Jobs, a workforce program for homeless families jointly funded by DHCD and the Fireman Charitable Foundation, is in its third successful year. Western MA Secure Jobs is part of a statewide effort that includes 6 other regions and works closely with statewide advocates for the program. The Committee recommends that the Network prioritize advocacy in collaboration with the statewide strategy.
- **Expand HomeBASE eligibility to allow families in domestic violence (DV) shelters and substance abuse programs to access this resource. Allow families to renew HomeBASE until their income reaches 50% of the Area Median Income in order to achieve the program goals of housing stability.** HomeBASE offers families an alternative to shelter by providing stabilization services and up to \$8,000 in financial

assistance. Currently, only families determined to be eligible for Emergency Assistance (EA) are able to access HomeBASE. Expanding access to families in domestic violence and substance abuse programs will allow more movement out of these systems and more triaging between program types so families can be placed based on their service needs. Funding this program at \$39.2 million (an increase from \$31.2 million in FY16) would allow for this correction and for greater housing stability for participants. *(Statewide support: CHAPA, Homes for Families, MA Coalition for the Homeless)*

- **Support the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)** to increase the number of vouchers available, help preserve affordable housing developments and make programmatic fixes that will increase the program's success. The increase from last year's \$90 million to \$120 million recognizes this program's critical role in preventing and ending homelessness. It would restore the program to its 1990 funding when the combined state voucher and Chapter 707 programs funded more than double the number of vouchers funded today. *(Statewide support: Housing Solutions Campaign, CHAPA, Homes for Families, MA Coalition for the Homeless)*
- **Fund McKinney-Vento transportation costs for transporting homeless children to their local schools.** Federal law imposes an unfunded mandate to transport children dislocated from their communities due to homelessness back to their local schools on a daily basis. Cities and towns spent over \$20 million in FY16 on such transportation costs and were reimbursed by the state at roughly 30 cents on the dollar. Providing level funding of \$8.35 million in FY17 would help close the gap. *(Statewide support: MA Coalition for the Homeless)*

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

- **Support housing and services for unaccompanied homeless youth (\$4 million).** This budget request last year resulted in landmark funding of \$2 million to serve this population. While this is a meaningful advance, we continue to work towards more fully funding the effort to prevent and end youth homelessness in Western MA and statewide. *(Statewide support: Mass. Coalition for the Homeless)*
- **Support Home and Healthy for Good (\$3.8 million),** a Housing First program that provides permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless, including a program for LGBTQ unaccompanied homeless youth. Our region provides services to youth through this LGBTQ funding. According to the Mass. Housing and Shelter Alliance, the program saves the Commonwealth an annual average of \$12,101 per person because of a decreased reliance on other expensive public services. *(Statewide support: CHAPA, MA Coalition for the Homeless)*

Western MA Network to End Homelessness: Earmark Funding

Per the Network survey conducted in December, 2015, where 64% of respondents supported the Network's advocacy to receive an earmark in FY 17 and 81% supported a request for \$125,000, the Steering Committee recommends the Network adopt Network funding as a priority budget item in FY 17.

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