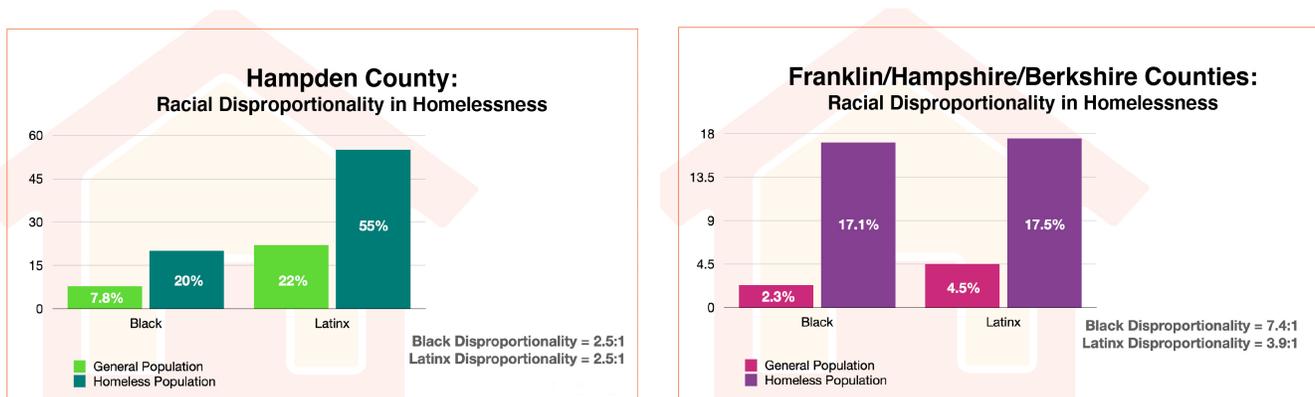




Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness FY22 Budget Requests

The Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness seeks to prevent and end homelessness through a Housing First Approach that centers racial equity. As a result of systemic racism, homelessness in the Western region, similar to our entire state and nation, disproportionately impacts people of color:



Source: Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) data 2016–2019

Our budget priorities for FY22, in collaboration with our statewide partners, reflect our highest goal of ending racial inequity in homelessness:

Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) (7004-9024): (1) **Increase funding to \$160 million** to maintain services and to significantly increase the number of low-income households served (FY21 funding: \$135 million). Governor Baker has proposed \$122.6 million in direct appropriations, which he said would be combined with other funds outside the budget. (2) **Decrease the required tenant share of rent** to 30% of income from the current range of 30–40% of income. (Note MRVP bill [SD1899/HD3277](#) to codify the program and make these improvements).

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) (70094-9316): (1) **Increase funding to \$55 million to address the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing needs** (FY21 funding: \$54.7 million). These funds would be combined with federal emergency rental assistance and other relief services. Governor Baker recommended \$16.3 million with \$2.6 million in retained revenues. (2) **Raise the \$10,000 cap on annual benefits** and make permanent the allowance to combine RAFT and HomeBASE funds. (3) **Mandate detailed tracking and reporting** on households applying, approved, denied, demographics and funding use.

Homeless Individuals Assistance (7004-0102) **At least level funding of \$56.3 million**, which even then only meets 61% of actual shelter costs. The Governor's proposed budget at \$53.3 million is a 5.5% budget cut in shelter funding, which is especially egregious in light of this year's extraordinary demands. See this [Mass. Housing and Shelter Alliance fact sheet](#) for additional background.

HomeBASE Renewals for Families (7004-0108): \$45 million to continue payments to households currently enrolled in HomeBASE that need an extension to maintain housing stability and to enroll new households in both the diversion and shelter exit components of HomeBASE. The Governor recommended just under \$26 million for FY22 and did not include language allowing for renewals.

Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs) (7004-3036): \$6.5 million, as compared to the Governor's recommendation to level fund at \$4.75 million. The pandemic will continue to impact housing security for thousands of Western Massachusetts households through FY22 and this funding level will allow the HCEC's to maintain current staffing levels, which is essential to meet the demand for resources and housing counseling assistance.

Emergency Shelter for Children and Families (Emergency Assistance,7004-0101): \$196 million, as compared to the Governor's recommendation of \$195.9 million (FY21: \$180.9 million). EA language changes are necessary (also see SD2155/HD3095) to ensure proper implementation of FY21 policy adopted regarding eligibility based on imminent risk of homelessness; to allow families to maintain eligibility up to 200% of the federal poverty guidelines and more.

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (4000-0007): Level funding of \$8 million in order to sustain the housing and wraparound services for youth and young adults age 24 and younger who are without homes. The Governor recommends a cut of \$3 million for FY22.

Home and Healthy for Good (7004-0104): Level funding of \$3.89 million. The Governor recommends a \$1 million cut, which would threaten the completion of critically needed supportive housing units currently under development.

Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) (7004-3045): Level funding of \$1.5 million. The Governor's recommendation cuts the program to \$1.3 million. Given the additional pressures on housing stability, this program is especially vital as it preserves tenancies for individuals and families who are facing eviction as a result of behavior in the household related to a disability. TPP prevents homelessness for over 94% of households statewide.

Alternative Housing Voucher Program (7004-9030): Level funding of \$12.5 million to provide additional housing subsidies to individuals under the age of 60 who are living with disabilities. The Governor's proposal cuts funding by more than half to \$5.6 million for FY22.

Western Region-Specific Requests:

Safe Havens Housing for Hampshire and Franklin Counties (5046-0000): \$422,000 to fund this evidence-based housing program for extremely vulnerable individuals who sleep unsheltered and are in need of intensive support. Western MA has only 7 of over 100 Safe Havens beds statewide, all located in Hampden County.

Berkshire County Winter Overflow Shelter Collaboration (7004-0102): \$150,000 to continue the collaboration with ServiceNet, Family Life, Inc.(Louison House), Construct, Inc., Soldier On and Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority to provide winter shelter beds and supportive services.

Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness (7004-0107): \$75,000 to continue the implementation of Housing First across the region, facilitating the coordination and collaboration necessary to make homelessness in Western Massachusetts rare, brief and non-recurring.

Contact: Pamela Schwartz, Director

Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness

pschwartz77@gmail.com

413-219-5658

westernmasshousingfirst.org