



## **Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness FY23 Budget Requests (and FY22 Supplemental Budget Requests)**

The Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness seeks to prevent and end homelessness through a Housing First approach that centers racial equity. Towards that end, its Fiscal Year 2023 budget priorities, in collaboration with statewide partners, include the following:

### **Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) (70094-9316)**

- **Increase funding to at least \$250 million** to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and recovery needs. These funds would be combined with the other funds so that a total of \$450 million in new funds would be allocated for the remaining months of FY22 and FY23. Governor Baker recommended \$80 million for RAFT in FY23 and requested \$60 million in the pending FY22 supplemental budget.
- **Restore the \$10,000 cap on annual benefits** from the current cap of \$7,000 per household.
- Continue the existing budget provision that **allows eligible households to combine funds from RAFT and the HomeBASE program.**
- **Continue to mandate detailed tracking and reporting** on households apply, approved, denied, demographics and funding use.

### **FY22 Supplemental Budget/ARPA RAFT Request:**

- **\$200 million to maintain RAFT/ERAP through June 30** to be used under existing ERAP guidelines, which are more flexible and inclusive than RAFT guidelines.
- **\$50 million to ensure the Homeowners Assistance Fund (HAF)** protects against foreclosure by including coverage of tax, insurance, condo and other fees.
- **Expand and close loopholes in Chapter 257** by moving protections upstream.

### **Homeless Individuals Assistance (7004-0102)**

- **Increase funding to \$110 million** in order to meet emergency shelter needs and ensure equitable funding to the Western Massachusetts region. Governor Baker's proposed \$25 million increase to \$83.3 million, while a step in the right direction, is not sufficient to meet the need.

### **Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) (7004-9024)**

- **Increase funding to \$200 million** to maintain existing services and benefits to households currently served by the program and to increase the number of households served by the program. The Governor recommended just under \$130 million, along with funds from additional sources to total \$145.1 million.
- **Decrease the required tenant share of rent to 30% of income** from the current range of 30-40%.
- **Shift to a payment standard model** to allow mobile subsidy holders greater autonomy and opportunity in choosing where to rent, aligning with the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program.

### **Safe Havens (DMH Statewide Homelessness Support Services) (5046-2000)**

- **Increase funding of this line item to \$27,116 million**, a \$2.5 million increase over the Governor's proposal in order to create five new Safe Havens statewide. Thanks to our region's legislative leadership, a new Safe Havens program was funded in Greenfield this year. But this proven model for housing our most vulnerable residents must be expanded to meet the urgent need.

### **Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Services (40000-0007)**

- **Increase funding to \$10 million**, up from the Governor's FY 23 recommendation of \$8.5 million and FY22 funding of \$8 million in order to provide sufficient services to end youth homelessness.

### **HomeBASE Program (7004-0108)**

- **Fund at least \$56.9 million** to continue payments to households currently enrolled in HomeBASE that need an extension and to enroll new households in the program. Governor Baker recommended just under \$56.9 million in FY23.
- **Allow eligible families to receive at least 2 years of HomeBASE benefits.** The Governor included language in his budget to make HomeBASE a two-year program.
- **Increase HomeBASE payments from \$10,000/year to \$15,000/year**, with additional flexibility for DHCD to address family needs.
- **Include language to lift income eligibility for families** once enrolled in HomeBASE to allow families to maximize their income.
- **Allow households to maximize resources from RAFT, ERAP and HomeBASE programs**, and to carry over unspent FY22 funds into FY23.

### **Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs) (7004-3036)**

- **Level fund at \$8.2 million**, consistent with the Governor's FY23 proposal and FY22 funding levels, in order for HCECs to continue to provide the vital gateway to housing stability and opportunity across the region.

### **Tenancy Preservation Program (7004-3045)**

- **Level Fund at \$1.8 million**, consistent with Governor Baker's FY23 proposal to continue this housing preservation program for people with disabilities who are facing the threat of eviction.

### **Home and Healthy for Good Program for Individuals (7004-0104)**

- **Increase funding to \$6.39 million** and continue to provide dedicated support to LGBTQ young adults experiencing homelessness. Governor Baker recommended level funding of \$3.89 million for FY23.

### **Regional Transit Advancement (1595-6370)**

- **Increase funding to \$101 million** to maintain service and address the driver shortage. Governor Baker proposed level funding of \$94 million but eliminated \$3.5 million for discretionary grants, leaving only \$90.5 million to support RTA operations in FY23.

### **The Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness Earmark (7004-0107)**

- **Level Fund at \$75,000** to continue the implementation of Housing First across the region, facilitating the coordination and collaboration necessary to prevent and end homelessness in Western MA.