



Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness FY23 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) (7004-9316)

- **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.

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 (4000-0007)

- **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.