

# HD. 216 An Act to create and implement a *Massachusetts Flexible Supportive Housing Subsidy Pool Program*

2023  
Factsheet

Lead Sponsor: Representative Joan Meschino

*Join us and Representative Meschino and help create accessible supportive housing for Massachusetts*

## THE OPPORTUNITY

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed the inadequacy of our region's social safety net in meeting the needs of families, youth, adults, and seniors experiencing homelessness. The pandemic continues to push our crisis response system to the limit, further straining the state's patchwork of critical services and supports that keep low-income households stable. Now is the time to **take coordinated, comprehensive action to ensure these resources are leveraged effectively and equitably.**



**Supportive Housing is a highly effective, cost-efficient strategy** that combines affordable housing with intensive, coordinated services to help people struggling with chronic physical and behavioral health issues maintain stable housing and access critical health care services. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, **this model saves an average of over \$6,000 a year per person in healthcare costs.**

According to the Massachusetts Pay For Success Initiative, **84% of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness who receive supportive services and a housing voucher remain housed one year later.**



Major metropolitan regions like Chicago and Los Angeles have taken an innovative approach to address this issue – creating a **nimble, flexible pool of funding, coupled with private support and health care investments, to help fill in the existing gaps.** Here in Massachusetts, stakeholders have identified the need for a similar fund that braids public and private funding and is responsive to the needs of our most vulnerable neighbors. We have a unique opportunity to strengthen the coordination and delivery of supportive services that help people exit streets, doubled-up housing, and emergency response systems like hospitals, jails, and shelters.

## *The Massachusetts Flexible Supportive Housing Pool Program (MFSHP) would:*

### **1. Streamline the administration of services to individuals, youth, and families experiencing homelessness.**

The bill will leverage public and private funding streams to provide flexible, responsive funding for housing subsidies as well as tenancy stabilization and supports when there is no other alternative payer (i.e., MassHealth). The MFSHP focuses on bundling and delivering these resources in a new way that improves the efficiency of housing placement, centralizes the coordination of housing and services, and ultimately reduces the time to achieve long-term stabilization.



**2. Ensure that existing state programs are deployed equitably to reach our most vulnerable residents.**

While the state administers and funds dozens of programs to support individuals, youth, and families experiencing homelessness, it is extremely challenging and burdensome for residents experiencing a crisis to navigate and access this complex web of services.

**3. Create a statewide Funder's Collaborative to End Homelessness.**

The legislation would establish a Funder's Collaborative, tasked with securing private contributions into the MFSHP, investing around a unified, data-informed vision to end homelessness, and seeding local innovations.

**4. Braid existing resources for housing and health care into a unified, flexible funding stream to support trauma-informed service delivery, regional coordination efforts, and integrated services.**

Using data and working with local partners, the MFSHP will focus on geographic areas of high need, prioritizing partnerships, streamlining the housing placement process, and providing services to address complex behavioral health needs. The third-party nonprofit will serve as an intermediary between DHCD and applicants.

**5. Improve outcomes and identify best practices for sustained investments.**

The MFSHP seeks to achieve the following goals: improvement in overall health of participants, increased use of appropriate health services, and corresponding reduction in use of crisis care such as hospital emergency rooms; fewer days in jail, court, or police custody; and increased stability and length of residency in supportive housing.

The MFSHP seeks ways to re-orient the current crisis system response – from crisis to stability. **Importantly, this bill focuses on reaching high utilizers of crisis systems, including residents with behavioral health needs, justice-involved individuals, victims of domestic violence, and older adults.**



***We have a unique opportunity to strengthen the coordination and delivery of supportive services that help people exit streets, doubled-up housing, and emergency response systems like hospitals, jails, and shelters.***

***Let's not waste it – We urge your support for HD. 216 and your consideration to become a co-sponsor of this important legislation.***