

The Building Blocks Coalition

Coalition Members: February 24, 2015

*Boston Center for
Independent Living*

**RE: FY2016 State Budget Priorities for Affordable Housing and
Homelessness Prevention**

*Citizens' Housing and
Planning Association*

Dear Legislator,

*Commonwealth Housing
Task Force*

On behalf of the Building Blocks Coalition, I wanted to share our FY2016 state budget priorities for affordable housing and homelessness prevention programs.

HAPHousing

The Building Blocks Coalition, hosted by Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, is a group of organizations that come together to advocate for resources that will help all families in the Commonwealth find a safe, decent, and affordable place to call home. We represent a broad group of supporters, including: public housing authorities and tenants; community development corporations; community action agencies; independent living centers; homelessness advocates; childcare; and other organizations concerned about access to affordable housing.

Home Funders

Homes for Families

*Horizons for Homeless
Children*

*Massachusetts Association
for Community Action*

The Building Blocks Coalition supports increasing revenues in a fair way in order to generate sufficient revenue to make greater investments in our state's infrastructure, including the state's affordable housing stock. Making these larger investments will help the state reduce homelessness and housing instability; help persons with disabilities and seniors access affordable housing; improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods and communities; and create jobs.

*Massachusetts
Association of Community
Development Corporations*

*Massachusetts Coalition for
the Homeless*

We hope that you support our budget priorities. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Eric Shupin, Policy Associate at Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, at (617) 742-0820.

*Massachusetts Housing and
Shelter Alliance*

Sincerely,

*Massachusetts Law Reform
Institute*



*Massachusetts Union of
Public Housing Tenants*

Brenda Clement
Executive Director
Citizens' Housing and Planning Association

MassNAHRO

*Metropolitan Boston
Housing Partnership*

*New Lease for Homeless
Families*

Building Blocks Coalition FY2016 State Budget Priorities for Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention

Line Item	Program	FY16 Request	FY15	FY14	FY13	FY12	FY11
7004-3036	Housing Consumer Education Centers	2,600,000	2,141,992	2,641,992	1,445,996	1,495,996	1,495,996
7004-3045	Tenancy Preservation Program	1,000,000	500,000	500,000	350,000	250,000	250,000
7004-9005	PHA Operating	69,000,000	64,035,000	64,400,000	64,450,000	62,500,000	62,500,000
7004-9024	MRVP	100,000,000	64,123,364	57,500,000	42,000,000	36,000,000	34,300,000
7004-9030	AHVP	7,100,000	3,550,000	3,450,000	3,450,000	3,450,000	3,450,000
7004-9316	RAFT	14,500,000	11,000,000	10,000,000	8,760,000	260,000	260,000
7004-0108	HomeBASE	30,000,000	25,955,535	58,963,556	88,674,371	66,460,829	
7004-0104	Home and Healthy for Good	1,800,000	1,800,000	1,600,000	1,400,000	1,200,000	1,200,000
4120-4001	Housing Registry	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000
7006-0011	Foreclosure Counseling	2,650,000	2,350,000	2,650,000	2,590,000	2,650,000	2,650,000
	Community Preservation Act	25,000,000					
	Housing Pres. & Stabilization Trust Fund	10,000,000					
New	Resident Svc Coordinators	2,500,000					
New	Fuel Assistance	20,000,000					
New	Brownfields Redevelopment Fund	15,000,000					

FY2016 State Budget Priorities for Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention

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

FY'16 Request: \$100 million

MRVP is the most effective tool to immediately address the overwhelming need to help people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness secure homes they can afford. Through a combination of project-based vouchers and new mobile vouchers, this program provides safe affordable housing for families and individuals experiencing instability. \$100 million will provide more than 1,000 additional mobile and project-based vouchers and fund the existing stock of approximately 7,000 vouchers.

Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP) (7004-9030)

FY'16 Request: \$7.1 million

AHVP provides rental assistance to approximately 400 very low-income households for persons with disabilities. Together with MRVP, this program is capable of furthering the Commonwealth's goal of providing persons with disabilities choices to live in community-based housing and avoid more costly institutional living. \$7.1 million will provide rental assistance to approximately 800 households.

Brownfields Redevelopment Fund

FY'16 Request: \$15 million

Since its creation in 1998, more than \$82 million has been awarded for the assessment or remediation of brownfields sites in 106 Massachusetts cities and towns. Redeveloping these sites revitalizes distressed areas and advances the state's desire to promote smart, sustainable development. Creating a line-item and capitalizing the Fund with \$15 million will ensure this tool remains available to Massachusetts cities and towns.

Community Preservation Act

FY'16 Request: Transfer \$25 million from end-of-year budget surplus to Community Preservation Trust Fund

The transferring of funds from the state's end-of-budget surplus to the Community Preservation Trust Fund supplements revenue from the existing CPA deeds recording fee. This funding is vital to sustaining the CPA program, which is now experiencing rapid growth following the legislature's recent approval of important amendments to the Act. CPA is one of the most effective state-local partnerships, resulting in a significant investment in affordable housing, historic preservation, recreational facilities, and open space.

Housing Preservation and Stabilization Trust Fund (HPSTF)

FY'16 Request: \$10 million for supportive housing and homelessness prevention

HPSTF was created in FY'14 to provide a flexible tool for funding affordable housing for low income families and individuals, particularly those most at-risk of becoming homeless. DHCD administers the fund using money unspent at the end of the fiscal year by several housing and homelessness programs. HPSTF is a critical resource for funding supportive housing and programs that prevent families from becoming homeless. Including language to direct \$10 million for supportive housing and homelessness prevention will ensure two important resources for households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Public Housing Operating Subsidy (7004-9005)

FY'16 Request: \$69 million

In 2014, significant public housing reform legislation was signed into law. These reforms strengthen transparency, capital planning, tenant participation in housing authority decisions, and create a pilot program to test innovations and maximize economies of scale. Reforms combined with an increase in the operating subsidy are necessary to keep units online, and preserve this resource for low-income families, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) (7004-9316)

FY'16 Request: \$14.5 million

RAFT enables families that experience unemployment or other challenges to avoid homelessness through an array of assistance necessary to maintain housing or move into their next home. In FY'15, RAFT has helped nearly 2,500 families avoid homelessness. Unfortunately, RAFT funds often run out before the end of the year and are expected to be depleted by April 2015. Increasing funding to \$14.5 million will ensure that this resource is available for the entire fiscal year, helping more families to avoid the need for shelter.

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

FY'16 Request: \$2.6 million

The HCECs are an essential element in the delivery systems for other state-funded housing resources, such as the RAFT and HomeBASE programs, helping families facing immediate housing crises to assess their circumstances, and referring them to available resources. HCECs are also pro-active; offering education for tenants, landlords, and homeowners to promote safe, stable and sustainable housing. During the first six months of this fiscal year, the HCECs assisted over 31,300 households, including more than 5,400 at risk of homelessness or seeking shelter, and more than 7,800 in search of affordable housing.

Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) (7004-3045)**FY'16 Request: \$1 million**

TPP prevents homelessness among people with disabilities by working with landlords and tenants, and providing clinical consultation services to the Housing Court. The program is extremely cost effective, stabilizing 87% of households served with an average cost of \$2,950 per case. \$1 million would provide approximately 850 households with TPP services.

Home and Healthy for Good (7004-0104)**FY'16 Request: \$1.8 million**

Home and Healthy for Good is a critical Housing First program. As of January 2015, 816 formerly chronically homeless people were housed through this program. Since its start in 2006, only 36 people have been documented as returning to homelessness. According to the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, the annual cost to the Commonwealth per person decreased from \$33,446 before housing to \$24,107 in housing and support costs after housing placement, resulting in an annual savings of \$9,339 per person.

HomeBASE (7004-0108)**FY'16 Request: \$30 million**

HomeBASE offers families an alternative to shelter by providing stabilization services and up to \$8,000 in financial assistance to pay rent, utility bills, security deposits, and other expenses that would allow them to stay in their homes, move to new housing, or live with another family. In the first six months of the current fiscal year, HomeBASE has already helped over 1,800 families exit or avoid shelter. Currently, only families who are eligible for shelter under Emergency Assistance, are eligible for HomeBASE, leaving families in domestic violence and substance abuse shelters without this tool to help families exit these shelters for housing. Changing the language to allow families in domestic violence and substance abuse shelters will help move more families out of shelter and provide openings in these programs for additional families in need of these services.

Foreclosure Prevention Counseling (7006-0011 – retained revenue)**FY'16 Request: \$2.65 million**

Ch. 206 foreclosure counseling grants have helped achieve the best possible outcome for many struggling homeowners. The foreclosure counseling grants are funded through retained revenue from mortgage loan originator license fees.

Massachusetts Access Affordable Housing Registry (4120-4001)**FY'16 Request: \$80,000**

The Mass. Access Registry is an online tool that consumers and housing search workers use to find affordable housing that does not have physical barriers to persons with disabilities. In the past year, more than 110,000 people visited the site to search for housing.

Resident Service Coordinators**FY'16 Request: \$2.5 million**

The funding would provide service coordinators in up to 50 new or existing privately owned state and federally assisted housing developments to help reduce evictions, increase housing stability, and coordinate residents' access to opportunities for education, job training, and other services to promote self-sufficiency. As the Legislature recognized with the passage of the Supportive Housing Initiative in 2012, housing is critical in connecting residents to healthcare and other vital services that increase household stability.

Fuel Assistance**FY'16 Request: \$20 million**

The federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) allocation has decreased from \$200 million to \$121 million, leaving nearly 200,000 households vulnerable to exhausting their fuel assistance benefit long before winter ends. By creating a new line item and supplementing the federal allocation, these 200,000 low income families, children, and elderly residents will stay safe and warm throughout the entire winter season.

For more information, please contact Eric Shupin, Policy Associate at Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, eshupin@chapa.org or 617-742-0820