

## FY2016 Senate Budget Amendments Supported by CHAPA

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

[Amendment 446](#)

Senator Forry's amendment allows for an expected \$7 million in prior MRVP appropriations from FY2015 to be continued into FY2016, bringing its funding from \$85.4 million in the Ways and Means budget to approximately \$92 million. This language, which was included in the FY2015 budget, will create approximately 740 new vouchers for households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

### **Support Foreclosure Counseling and Advocacy**

[Amendment 442](#)

Senator Eldridge's amendment shifts the community-based foreclosure counseling and advocacy program to the Division of Banks after the grant from the Attorney General's office ends on July 31, 2015. The program equips advocates with the skills and tools to ensure homeowners in danger of foreclosure are given a "fair review" of their requests for a loan modification. In one year, the program accepted over 1,400 clients across Massachusetts through a network of ten community development corporations and community action agencies. Funding for the program will come from an additional \$800,000 in retained revenue for the Division of Banks. The Division currently retains \$2.65 million for first-time homeowner counseling for non-traditional loans and foreclosure counseling centers. This amendment brings the total amount of retained revenue to \$3,450,000.

### **Support the Housing Preservation and Stabilization Trust Fund (HPSTF)**

[Amendment 483](#)

Senator Eldridge's amendment provides \$10 million for HPSTF through a combination of \$6.5 million from programs administered by MassHousing and \$3.5 million from the General Fund. Created by the FY14 budget, HPSTF provides DHCD with flexibility to fund new initiatives, create housing, and provide resources to respond to urgent needs. HPSTF has created supportive housing, supplemented HomeBASE to help more families avoid or exit the shelter system, and partially funded the Secure Jobs Initiative.

### **Expand Access and Funding for HomeBASE (7004-0108)**

[Amendment 422](#)

Senator Lovely's amendment builds on the Senate's efforts to coordinate services between EOHHS and DHCD by targeting resources to families living in domestic violence and substance abuse shelters. Currently, only families who are eligible for Emergency Assistance shelter under 7004-0101 are able to access HomeBASE. This will help approximately 300 families in domestic violence and substance abuse shelter that have few other resources to help them move out of shelter, while providing openings for additional families in need of these services. The amendment also increases funding for HomeBASE to \$33 million.

### **Improve Coordination among Agencies to Support Homeless Families**

[Amendment 849](#)

Senator Chang-Diaz's amendment builds on the coordination between state agencies to prevent homelessness through the new Homelessness Prevention Reserve Fund (1599-0017) included in the Ways and Means proposal. This amendment strengthens homelessness prevention efforts by making the new fund available to families that apply for or receive services through DHCD and EOHHS. This amendment also aims to avoid duplicating existing homelessness prevention programs and clarifies reporting language.

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

[Amendment 335](#)

Senator Wolf's amendment restores funding to FY2014 levels for HCECs from \$1.7 million to \$2.6 million. The HCECs administer RAFT and HomeBASE, help households facing immediate housing crises to assess their circumstances, and refer them to available resources. 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.

### **Increase Public Housing Operating Subsidy (7004-9005)**

[Amendment 471](#)

Senator Eldridge's amendment increases funding for local housing authorities from \$64 million to \$65 million. The additional funds will be used to implement the Public Housing Reform legislation, signed into law during last session, at the local level. The amendment will also help preserve public housing for very low-income families, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

### **Expand the Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) (7004-3045)**

[Amendment 410](#)

Senator Welch's amendment increases funding for TPP from \$500,000 to \$1 million. TPP works as a neutral partner with landlords and tenants facing eviction as a result of behavior related to a disability, such as age-related impairments, mental illness, substance abuse, and developmental disabilities. The program is extremely cost effective, stabilizing 92% of households served with an average cost of \$2,854 per case. The additional funds would provide approximately 200 additional households with TPP services and consultation services to an additional 600 households.

### **Expand and Improve the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP) (7004-9030)**

[Amendment 467](#)

Senator Eldridge's amendment provides an additional \$500,000 in funding for AHVP. The program provides rental assistance to very low-income households for persons with disabilities. The amendment also adjusts the language of AHVP to reflect how

the program is used and to allow for the future project-basing of vouchers. This will help further the Commonwealth's goal of increasing the number of accessible and affordable homes, providing persons with disabilities choices to live in community-based housing and avoid more costly institutional living.

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

[Amendment 492](#)

Senator Kennedy's amendment restores funding for Home and Healthy for Good to \$1.8 million, including \$200,000 for a program for unaccompanied homeless LGBTQ youth. 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. 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.

### **Support the Community Preservation Act (CPA)**

[Amendment 54](#)

Senator Creem's amendment transfers \$25 million from the end-of-year budget surplus to the Community Preservation Trust Fund. The transferring of funds from the state's end-of-budget surplus supplements revenue from the existing CPA deeds recording fee. This funding is vital to sustaining the CPA program, which is experiencing rapid growth following the Legislature's recent approval of important amendments to the Act. The 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.

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

[Amendment 356](#)

Senator Donnelly's amendment provides an additional \$1 million in funding for RAFT. This program enables families that experience unemployment or other challenges to avoid homelessness through an array of assistance needed to maintain housing or move into their next home. Unfortunately, RAFT funds often run out before the end of the fiscal year. Increasing funding to \$13 million will expand opportunities for more families.

### **Restore Forward Funding for HomeBASE and RAFT**

[Amendment 482](#)

Senator Eldridge's amendment allows for forward funding for HomeBASE (7004-0108) and RAFT (7004-9316). Currently, non-profit administering agencies are collectively advancing over \$2 million per month in critical resources to help families avoid or exit the shelter system. This creates a strain on cash flow that can delay payments when the Commonwealth falls behind on reimbursements and creates an unnecessary borrowing cost that detracts from the main purpose of these valuable resources. In the past, agencies received funds in advance based on prior spending, allowing the program to operate more effectively.

### **Make New Funding Available for Fuel Assistance**

[Amendment 465](#)

Senator Eldridge's amendment creates a new \$5 million line item for fuel assistance. With a decrease in funds from the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), nearly 200,000 households have been left vulnerable to exhausting their fuel assistance benefit long before the winter ends. By creating a new line item and supplementing the federal allocation, these families, children, and elderly residents will stay safe and warm throughout the entire winter season.

### **Increase the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**

[Amendments 5, 6, & 45](#)

CHAPA supports efforts to increase the state EITC, included in each of the above amendments. Increasing the EITC in Massachusetts will help working families make ends meet. Long-term structural trends in the U.S. economy leave many working families struggling to pay for housing, food, and childcare. A growing body of research has found that expansions in the EITC have increased participation in the workforce and have resulted in increased mobility and opportunity.

### **Expand the Housing Court**

[Amendment 115](#)

Senator Brownsberger's amendment expands Housing Court to the entire Commonwealth. Currently, over 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the state's population does not have access to a Housing Court, including most of Norfolk County, parts of Middlesex and Suffolk Counties, and all of Barnstable, Dukes, and Nantucket Counties. Expanding Housing Court will protect landlords and tenants by provided a forum with expertise in housing. Housing Court provides a cost-effective way to enforce the building, fire, and sanitary codes, prevent homelessness by preserving tenancies among people with disabilities, and reduce blight.

### **Invest in the Gateway Cities Transformative Development Initiative**

[Amendment 452](#)

Senator Downing's amendment creates a line item for the Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) and capitalizes it with \$5 million. This MassDevelopment program, created through the economic development legislation passed by the Legislature in 2014, supports redevelopment in Gateway Cities. TDI is an integrated systems approach to investment and urban redevelopment, focused on local collaborative partnerships, strategic district focus, and community engagement. The program includes technical assistance, additional capacity for selected cities through a Fellows Program, and equity investments in real estate.