



C H A P A

**Citizens' Housing and
Planning Association**

President
Vincent O'Donnell

July 10, 2015

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Jack Cooper
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His Excellency Charlie Baker
Governor of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts State House
Boston, MA 01233

Treasurer
Jeanne Pinado

Clerk
Naomi Sweitzer

**RE: FY2016 Budget Recommendations for Affordable Housing, Community
Development, and Homelessness Prevention Programs**

Executive Director
Brenda Clement

Dear Governor Baker,

I am writing to request your support for funding of affordable housing, community development, and homelessness prevention programs in the FY2016 budget. Specifically, we ask that you support the FY2016 budget investments in the following programs that will help address the housing challenges facing working families, seniors, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable households:

- Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) (7004-9024): \$ 90,931,597
- Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP) (7004-9030): \$ 4,600,000
- HomeBASE (7004-0108): \$ 31,249,331
- Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)(7004-9316): \$ 12,500,000
- Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs) (7004-3036): \$ 2,891,992
- Housing Preservation and Stabilization Trust Fund (HPSTF): \$ 11,500,000
- Home and Healthy for Good (7004-0104): \$ 1,800,000
- Public Housing Authority Operating (7004-9005): \$ 64,500,000
- Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) (7004-3045): \$ 500,000
- Foreclosure Counseling (7006-0011): \$ 2,350,000
- Accessible Housing Registry (4120-4001): \$ 80,000
- Homelessness Prevention Reserve (1599-0017): \$ 1,000,000
- Community Preservation Trust Fund: \$10,000,000
- Transformative Development Fund (7002-1502); and \$1,000,000
- Earned Income Tax Credit.

These resources prioritize preventing and reducing homelessness, which is also a priority of your Administration. In developing these appropriations, CHAPA worked with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), legislative offices, and key stakeholders to ensure these resources are used as efficiently and effectively as possible in order to reduce housing instability for families and individuals and to promote thriving communities.

We are pleased with the increased investments in permanent housing solutions, including rental vouchers, which are proven to help lift families out of homelessness. The Legislature's investment in MRVP will help an additional 800 families find homes. Also, increased funding for AHVP will further the Commonwealth's goal of providing persons with disabilities choices to find community-based homes and avoid more costly institutional living. Investments in these and other permanent housing programs, including HPSTF and Home and Healthy for Good, along with homelessness prevention resources through increases to RAFT, HomeBASE, and HCECs, will reduce the strain on our costly shelter system and will move families out of motels and hotels.

We look forward to working with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to implement the new Homelessness Prevention Reserve Fund, included originally in your House One budget. This fund will foster partnerships and coordination among low-income families, government agencies, and service providers to reduce homelessness.

We also support the authorization for a \$10 million transfer from the end-of-year state budget surplus into the Community Preservation Trust Fund. The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a flexible resource that enables communities to expand affordable housing opportunities. With Trust Fund revenue from the Registries of Deeds down, this \$10 million is be critical in providing a robust match to CPA communities this year.

We support the investment in our Gateway Cities through the Transformative Development Fund. This MassDevelopment program is an integrated systems approach to urban redevelopment, focused on local collaborative partnerships, strategic district focus, and community engagement. The Fund will support vibrant economies in communities across the Commonwealth.

Finally, we support the increase to the state earned income tax credit. Increasing the state EITC will help working families make ends meet as they struggle to pay for housing, food, and childcare. Thank you for leading the conversation on the EITC to help increase economic opportunity for working families.

While we appreciate the commitments made in the budget for housing programs, we are concerned about the cut for foreclosure counseling (7006-0011). The cut of \$300,000 impacts the ability of families and individuals to access critical resources as they face the possibility of losing their homes. We hope your Administration will look for additional opportunities to restore funding for this critical resource.

We appreciate your consideration and support for affordable housing, community development, and homelessness prevention. The Commonwealth has the opportunity to address these challenges for thousands of struggling families and individuals by investing in these key programs in the FY2016 budget.

Sincerely,



Brenda Clement
Executive Director

cc: Secretary Kristen Lepore, Executive Office of Administration and Finance
Secretary Jay Ash, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
Undersecretary Chrystal Kornegay, Department of Housing and Community Development