



**C H A P A**

**Citizens' Housing and  
Planning Association**

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July 22, 2015

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Chairman Brian S. Dempsey  
House Committee on Ways and Means

Chairwoman Karen E. Spilka  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

**Treasurer**  
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**RE: Budget Override Requests for Affordable Housing, Community  
Development, and Homelessness Prevention Programs in the FY2016 Budget**

**Clerk**  
*Naomi Sweitzer*

Dear Chairman Dempsey and Chairwoman Spilka,

**Executive Director**  
*Brenda Clement*

Thank you for strongly supporting affordable housing, community development, and homelessness prevention programs in the FY2016 budget. With your leadership and the support of your colleagues, the Legislature's FY2016 budget provides significant increases for proven programs that will help every family in the Commonwealth have a safe, decent, and affordable home.

In order to continue this progress towards lifting all families, Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) requests that the Legislature override Governor Baker's vetoes of affordable housing, community development, and homelessness prevention programs in the FY2016 budget. Below are the program-specific veto overrides supported by CHAPA. Thank you for your consideration.

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

*Override the Governor's \$3 million veto of MRVP and restore funding to \$90.9 million.*

CHAPA ask the Legislature to override the Governor's \$3 million veto of MRVP. The program is the most effective tool to immediately address the homelessness and affordable housing crises in the Commonwealth. MRVP helps secure housing for families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, unaccompanied youth, seniors with low-incomes, and chronically homeless adults. MRVP is a critical tool for preserving affordable housing units that are at risk of losing their affordability restrictions and for expanding the Commonwealth's affordable housing stock.

We greatly appreciate the Legislature's work towards restoring funding for MRVP. Historically, the number of households receiving rental assistance from MRVP has fallen from over 19,800 vouchers in 1990 to below 4,500 in late 2007. Since then, the number of leased vouchers has risen to approximately 6,800 and more project-based units are expected to come online in FY2016. Today's MRVP number reflects significant reinvestments in recent years made by the Legislature. We ask that you continue this progress and restore MRVP funding to \$90.9 million, which will create about 800 new vouchers.

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

*Override the Governor's veto and restore funding to \$2.89 million.*

The Legislature's funding of \$2.89 million for HCECs recognizes that these centers are essential to the delivery systems for other state-funded housing resources, such as RAFT and HomeBASE. HCECs meet with families facing immediate housing crises to assess their circumstances and refer them to available resources. HCECs are also pro-active; offering education for tenants, landlords, and homeowners to promote safe, stable, and sustainable housing. In FY2015, the HCECs assisted more than 73,000 households across the state.

Increased support for the HCECs results in increased capacity to meet the needs of families struggling to maintain stable housing. Restoring funding would allow the HCECs to restore staff capacity that was reduced due to FY2015 funding levels. This will also result in more efficiently helping families avoid homelessness through RAFT because HCEC staff screen all families who receive RAFT assistance. The HCEC staff also work closely with HomeBASE staff, offering materials and support related to housing search for families living in motels.

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

*Override the Governor's veto reducing HPSTF's appropriation by \$1.5 million.*

CHAPA asks the Legislature to override the Governor's veto of HPSTF, which reduces funding for the program by \$1.5 million by eliminating any transfer from the General Fund and instead increasing the transfer from MassHousing to \$10 million. The Legislature's appropriation of \$11.5 million, funded through a transfer of \$6.5 million from programs administered by MassHousing and \$5 million from the General Fund, will provide DHCD with more 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.

### **HomeBASE (7004-0108)**

*Override the Governor's veto that eliminates forward funding for HomeBASE.*

Finally, CHAPA asks the Legislature to override the Governor's veto that eliminates forward funding for HomeBASE. Currently, nonprofit 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 this valuable resource. In the past, agencies received funds in advance based on prior spending, allowing the program to operate more effectively. Overriding the Governor's veto will help serve more families by using HomeBASE resources more efficiently

Thank you for your leadership and continued support for providing quality, safe, and affordable homes for everyone in the Commonwealth. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Brenda Clement  
Executive Director

cc: Rep. Robert A. DeLeo, Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Sen. Stanley C. Rosenberg, President of the Senate  
Rep. Kevin G. Honan, Chairman, Joint Committee on Housing  
Sen. Linda Dorcena Forry, Chairwoman, Joint Committee on Housing  
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