



# CHAPA FY2016 State Budget Priorities for Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention

*Citizens' Housing and Planning Association 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 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. More than 94,500 people used the site in 2013 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.