ON SOLID GROUND
BUILDING OPPORTUNITY, PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

It is time for a new approach to family homelessness.

Progress is possible.

Massachusetts has demonstrated a long-held commitment to helping families afford homes. However, due to a culmination of low wages, high housing costs, and cuts to services, supports, and opportunities, there are currently 4,800 Massachusetts families living in shelters and motels each night. An estimated 4,200 more families that live in unstable, doubled up situations, move multiple times per year, or are behind on rent may experience the same harms as homeless families, even though they avoid shelter entry. These 9,000+ families represent just a fraction of the 79,000 extremely low-income renter families at risk of homelessness.

It is time for a new approach to addressing family homelessness. By focusing on housing and economic stability, instead of the short-term goal of reducing shelter numbers, thousands of families will avoid the need for shelter, and families in shelter will be less likely to re-enter in the future. Progress is possible.

To tackle this crisis, we must foster partnerships between low-income families, service providers, employers, property owners, federal and state government, and philanthropic communities. Such a collaborative approach requires both additional resources and changes to how services are offered. The Commonwealth is well-positioned to lead the effort for a four-year systems change strategy that will increase the number of families who are ***on solid ground***.

Photo courtesy of Bethany Versoy for MBHP

CREATING A PATH TO HOUSING STABILITY AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Increasing stability and reducing family homelessness requires a four-pronged approach:

1. **Systems Change:** Appoint a Special Secretary to build a coordinated service delivery system across government departments. The coordinated system will support homelessness prevention, minimize cliff effects, and provide integrated case management services.
2. **Housing:** Expand the affordable housing stock and rental assistance vouchers for extremely low-income households; preserve existing privately and publicly subsidized homes; and improve public housing.
3. **Supportive Services:** Invest in services that provide a path to increased incomes and economic mobility for extremely low-income families.
4. **Tracking Progress:** Collect and analyze data, and track progress – at state agencies and their nonprofit partners - toward an agreed upon set of goals related to housing stability and economic mobility.

Photo courtesy of Patrick O'Connor Photography

If adopted and funded, these measures give us our best chance at reducing the number of families who become homeless, shortening the time families live in shelter, strengthening housing and economic stability, and giving at-risk children a better chance at a healthy, secure and successful adulthood.

For citations, please see the full report.

WWW.CHAPA.ORG/ONSOLIDGROUND

"The problem...will not disappear with short-term, emergency responses."

- Profile of the Homeless in Massachusetts (1983), Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Photo courtesy of Bethany Versoy for MBHP

COALITION PARTNERS:

This coalition will continue to grow in order to represent all the tools that families need for stability in our changing economy.

Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness
Bessie Tartt Wilson Initiative for Children
B'nai B'rith Housing
Casa Myrna
Children's HealthWatch
Citizens for Affordable Housing in Newton Development Organization (CAN-DO)
Citizens' Housing and Planning Association
Crittenton Women's Union
Family Independence Initiative
Family-to-Family Project
Father Bill's & Mainspring
HAPHousing
Home Funders
Homes for Families
Horizons for Homeless Children
Jane Doe Inc., the Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence
Jewish Community Relations Council
Massachusetts Association for Community Action
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Massachusetts Public Health Association
Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership
One Family, Inc.
Project Bread
Project Hope
Regional Housing Network of Massachusetts
Somerville Homeless Coalition
Square One
Thrive In Five Initiative
Tzedek Reflection
Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness

RESEARCH PARTNERS:

Center for Social Policy, UMass Boston
Collins Center, UMass Boston
with research assistance from Massachusetts Budget & Policy Center

PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS:

The Boston Foundation
Oak Foundation
United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley

ON SOLID GROUND

BUILDING OPPORTUNITY, PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS