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July 20, 2017

Speaker Robert DeLeo
Chairman Jeffrey Sánchez

President Stanley Rosenberg
Chairwoman Karen Spilka

RE: FY2018 Budget Override Requests for Affordable Housing, Homelessness Prevention, & Community Development Programs

Dear Speaker DeLeo, President Rosenberg, Chairman Sánchez, and Chairwoman Spilka,

On behalf of Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), thank you for your strong support of affordable housing, homelessness prevention, and community development programs in the FY2018 budget.

Thanks to your leadership, the Legislature has made significant increased investments to provide affordable housing opportunities and homelessness prevention resources for families across the Commonwealth. The FY2018 budget passed by the Legislature demonstrated your dedication to some of our most vulnerable residents. Even in a difficult fiscal environment, the Conference Committee prioritized these resources and we sincerely thank you for your continued commitment to these programs.

Unfortunately, many of these resources now face deep cuts through Governor Baker's vetoes. In order to continue our progress towards helping everyone in the Commonwealth have a safe, healthy, and affordable place to call home, CHAPA asks that you quickly override the vetoes for the following programs.

Thank you again for your leadership and your consideration of these requests.

PROGRAM	VETO AMOUNT
• Alternative Housing Voucher Program (7004-9030).....	\$ 400,000
• Public Housing Operating Subsidy(7004-9005).....	\$ 1,520,407
• Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (7004-9316).....	\$ 2,000,000
• Foreclosure Prevention & Housing Counseling (7006-0011).....	\$ 800,000
• Housing Court Expansion (0336-0003).....	\$ 250,000
• Tenancy Preservation Program (7004-3045).....	\$ 125,000
• Home and Healthy for Good (7004-0104).....	\$ 40,000
• Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (4000-0007).....	\$ 675,000
• New Lease for Homeless Families (7004-0106).....	\$ 125,000



Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP) (7004-9024)**Veto: \$400,000**

Thank you for the Legislature's increased support for AHVP which will help more persons with disabilities find homes that are affordable and accessible. In 1995, AHVP served over 800 households. Today, the program serves just over 500 persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, the Governor's veto will level fund the program in FY2018, slowing the progress the Legislature has made towards restoring the program over the past few years.

Public Housing Operating Subsidy (7004-9005)**Veto: \$1,520,407**

Governor Baker's \$1.5 million veto of public housing operating subsidies leaves state public housing authorities with even less resources to support the more than 45,600 state-sponsored public housing units in Massachusetts, with over two-thirds of these units dedicated to seniors and persons with disabilities. Public Housing in Massachusetts is already underfunded. Further cuts will only worsen this problem, threatening the future of this critical affordable housing resource that serves some of our most vulnerable residents.

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) (7004-9316)**Veto: \$ 2,000,000**

We ask that you override Governor Baker's veto that eliminates \$2 million from RAFT and removes language that allows families of all types to access this homelessness prevention resource. Thank you for including the expanding RAFT eligibility that you authorized in the FY2017 budget. This allowed not only families with children to access the program, but also the elderly, persons with disabilities, and unaccompanied homeless youth. The \$2 million vetoed from the FY2018 budget was specifically dedicated to serve those who meet the expanded definition. Overriding the veto and restoring the language will allow more families avoid homelessness.

Foreclosure Prevention & Housing Counseling (7006-0011)**Veto: \$ 800,000**

CHAPA asks that you restore \$800,000 vetoed in line-Item 7006-0011 and language directing this funding to the Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs) (7004-3036). The Governor's veto would reduce funding for the HCECs by \$600,000, more than 22% of this year's statewide funding amount, and drop it below the funding level maintained since 2015. The HCECs continue to be one of the Commonwealth's most effective, impactful, and far-reaching housing and homelessness prevention programs. In an environment where resources are so narrowly targeted, the HCECs connect households with critical resources, such as HomeBASE and RAFT. On average, the Centers assist more than 6,000 households each month statewide.

A cut of this magnitude would result in immediate reductions to the professional HCEC direct care staff and their ability to provide housing assistance and homeless prevention services to consumers and clients in every region of the Commonwealth.

Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) (7004-3045)**Veto: \$125,000**

We ask that you override the Governor's veto for TPP to preserve critical support for this effective homelessness prevention resource. TPP works in Housing Court with households with disabilities facing eviction to determine whether a disability can be reasonably accommodated in order to preserve the tenancy. In FY2016, TPP stabilized 92% of households served. The additional funds for TPP would allow the program to help more persons with disabilities avoid homelessness and would help the program grow as Housing Court expands statewide.

Home and Healthy for Good (7004-0104)

Veto: \$ 40,000

We ask the Legislature to override the Governor's \$40,000 veto for Home and Healthy for good. CHAPA appreciates the increased support that you included for the program which will provide additional housing and support services to chronically homeless individuals through a low-threshold, Housing First model that is less costly and more effective than managing homelessness and health problems on the street or in shelter.

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (4000-0007)

Veto: \$675,000

The Governor eliminated all funding for the unaccompanied youth homelessness line-item. This will mean that many programs across the state will lose funding that provides wraparound support services for unaccompanied youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness. Since the program began in April 2016, it has served over 800 youth and young adults. We hope that you will restore funding to this program so that the program will continue to serve these homeless youths in FY2018.

New Lease for Homeless Families (7004-0106)

Veto: \$ 125,000

Thank you for including a new line-item for New Lease for Homeless Families in the FY2018 budget. New Lease houses homeless families residing in state-funded shelters and hotels by implementing a preference for these families in properties across the Commonwealth. Through New Lease, homeless families have the opportunity to live in desirable and affordable communities with the supports they need to achieve successful tenancies. The Governor vetoed all the funding for this program. We hope that you can restore the line-item to the budget with \$125,000 so that New Lease can continue to serve the nearly 300 families the program has worked with to help find and maintain a home.

Thank you again for your consideration of these override requests and for your leadership in supporting affordable housing and homelessness prevention. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Rachel Heller
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Rep. Kevin Honan, Chair, Joint Committee on Housing
Sen. Joseph Boncore, Chair, Joint Committee on Housing