**Building Blocks Coalition Meeting Notes**

**February 22, 2023**

**1:00–2:30 p.m.**

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| **Program** | **DRAFT FY2024 Requests** | ***FY2023 Requests*** | **FY2023 Budget** |
| Mass. Rental Voucher Program | **$250,000,000** | *$200,000,000* | $154,000,000† |
| Alternative Housing Voucher Program | **$26,000,000** | *$19,000,000* | $13,685,355‡ |
| Residential Assistance for Families in Transition | **$250,000,000** | *$250,000,000* | $150,000,000\* |
| Public Housing Operating | **$184,000,000** | *$92,000,000* | $92,000,000 |
| Housing Consumer Education Centers | **$10,185,000** | *$8,200,000* | $9,700,000 |
| Public Housing Reform | **$7,700,000** | *$1,000,000* | $1,000,000 |
| Home & Healthy for Good | **$8,390,000** | *$6,390,000* | $6,390,000 |
| HomeBASE | **$60,000,000** | *$59,911,201* | $59,411,201 |
| Foreclosure & Housing Counseling | **$3,050,000** | *$3,050,000* | $3,050,000 |
| Access to Counsel Program | **$7,000,000** | *-* | - |
| Tenancy Preservation Program | **$1,800,000** | *$1,800,000* | $1,800,000 |
| MassAccess Registry | **$150,000** | *$150,000* | $150,000 |
| Unaccompanied Homeless Youth | **$12,000,000** | *$10,000,000* | $9,500,000 |
| New Lease for Homeless Families | **$250,000** | *$250,000* | $250,000 |

† Includes language to carryover unspent funds from FY22 bringing total FY23 funding for MRVP to an estimated $175 million

‡ Includes language to carryover unspent funds from FY22 bringing total FY23 funding for AHVP to an estimated $19.2 million

\* An estimated $60 million in unspent RAFT funds from FY22 will carry over into FY23 bringing total FY23 funding for RAFT to an estimated $210 million

* **Background**
  + January tax revenues were down for the first time in two years
  + Revenue collections are still $900M above benchmarks but still have 5 months of the fiscal year to get through. If the numbers remain down, it may impact the FY2024 budget.
  + If revenue collections increase, state will be watching if 62F will be triggered again. This is the law that requires a tax rebate if revenue collections exceed certain benchmarks.
  + The House, Senate, and Administration and Finance [agreed on revenue figure](https://www.mass.gov/news/gorzkowicz-rodrigues-michlewitz-announce-consensus-revenue-forecast-of-40410-billion-for-fiscal-year-2024) for the FY2024 budget – but this could be readjusted if revenues remain down.
  + The consensus revenue estimate was $40.41 billion, a 1.6% increase over FY2023.
  + Governor Healey will release her first budget proposal on March 1 – her proposal is complete
  + [Housing Committee Assignments](https://www.chapa.org/housing-news/sen-edwards-rep-arciero-named-chairs-of-housing-committee) –
    - New Senate chair of Housing – Senator Lydia Edwards. Sen. Keenan became Vice-Chair.
    - Rep. Jim Arciero remained House Chair of Housing

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|  | **MRVP** | **AHVP** |
| FY2023 projected spending | $154,275,496 | $10,976,642 |
| Estimated FY2023 surplus (approximate) | $19,000,000 | $10,000,000 |
| **Mobile** vouchers leased | 5,238 | 695 |
| **Mobile** vouchers allocated | 6,353 | 1,150 |
| **Project-Based** vouchers leased | 4,229 | n/a\* |
| **Project-Based** vouchers allocated | 6,322 | n/a |
| Total **leased** vouchers (mobile & project-based) | 9,467 | n/a |
| Total **allocated** vouchers (mobile & project-based) | 12,675 | n/a |
| Monthly subsidy cost per voucher | $1,267 | $1,176 |

\*AHVP does not have project based vouchers

All data from DHCD as of January 2023

* **Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)**
  + The coalition discussed an FY2024 request for MRVP between $225 million – $250 million
    - Based on current voucher costs, $250 million would provide MRVP with an additional $95.7 million could support 6,296 new vouchers. At $225 million, MRVP could support 4,651 new vouchers.
  + The start of a new Administration, new legislative leadership, and a recently launched campaign to make rental assistance universal may provide an opportunity to support the larger funding request
  + However, the regularly occurring challenge of MRVP ending up with a multi-million surplus remains and makes it more difficult to ask for a large amount of new funding
  + No new **mobile** MRVP vouchers issued in FY2023; 200 **project-based** MRVPs issued in FY2023
  + MRVP to be integrated into CHAMP – expected by September 2023 – eligibility screening will also become centralized
  + MRVP monthly cost went up from $1,168 in July 2022 to $1,267 in January 2023 – reflects program changes made, including moving to a rent standard, including utilities, and lowering tenant rent share to 30% of income (for comparison, Section 8 per month cost is about $1,250)
  + Even with these changes, MRVP will have an estimated $19 million surplus with no plans for DHCD to spend this money
    - The coalition discussed if the surplus can be used to assist the family and individual homeless crisis or if it can be used towards the gaps in bringing supportive housing online.
    - CHAPA will convent a group of interested stakeholders to work on a proposal for using the surplus.
  + For language changes, it was discussed if the line-item could be amended to direct DHCD to provide notice if MRVP is running low on funding and to go to the Legislature for more funding if it looks like they are approaching the appropriated amount
* **Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP)**
  + Total ask for FY2024 is $26 million ($16.2 million + carry over funds)
  + The FY2023 surplus number expected to carry over into FY2024 is slightly less than $10 million
  + This carry over is not included in the “ask” but this means the requested line item appropriation is for $16.2 million (which is an increase of $2.5 million from last year, fund about 250 more vouchers which is the number they added this year)
* **Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)**
  + Requesting $250 million
    - This amount would allow about $20 million per month to be distributed – only slightly higher than what is currently distributed per month.
    - Program improvement would increase the amount needed per month. If we are successful in achieving program improvements, we would advocate for additional funding for RAFT if it risks running out of funds by the end of the fiscal year.
  + Administrators continue to see demand for the program. Monthly distribution levels are likely deflated and not capturing the true demand because of challenges in administering the program and program rules that the Coalition is advocating for changing
  + Will continue to advocate to remove the requirement for a notice to quit or utility shut off in order to access the program.
  + Advocates also working through legislation to make RAFT a more up-stream program and allow households to access up to 12 months of assistance with no benefit caps (HD1964/SD1169)
* **Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs)**
  + HCECs are requesting a 5% increase to its line-item to support the work of HCECs, the Regional Housing Network of Massachusetts, and its Housing Stabilization program – this would bring line-item to $10,185,000

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| HCECs – 7004-3036 | FY2024 | FY2023 |
| HCEC | $8,400,000 | $8,000,000 |
| HCEC – RHN Admin | $210,000 | $200,000 |
| Housing Stabilization | $1,575,000 | $1,500,000 |
| **HCEC Total:** | **$10,185,000** | **$9,700,000** |

* **Public Housing Operating**
  + Supporting an ask doubling the public housing operating line from $92 million to $184 million
  + United request of Mass. Union of Public Housing Tenants, MassNAHRO, CHAPA, and Greater Boston Interfaith Organization who are building a strong advocacy around this request
* **Public Housing Reform**
  + Mass. Union of Public Housing Tenants is asking for $7.7 million for the public housing reform line to support tenants.
  + The increase will support increased resident access to transportation, food, and language as well as an apprenticeship program
* **Home & Healthy for Good**
  + Mass. Housing and Shelter Alliance is requesting $8.39 million
* **HomeBASE**
  + $60 million request which could serve 4,000 households per year
  + Mass. Coalition for the Homeless also working on legislation to strengthen and improve the programs, including allowing automatic renewals and increasing the maximum benefit level – HD116/SD1535 filed by Rep. Barber and Sen. Miranda
* **Foreclosure & Housing Counseling**
  + Requesting level funding of $3.05 million and to keep language to guarantee at least $1.5 million for ch. 206 grants to support counseling agencies
* **Access to Counsel (NEW)**
  + New request for $7 million to support an access to counsel program to provide legal representative and assistance to residents with low incomes facing eviction
  + Funding would be through Mass. Legal Assistance Corporation and would support the program working to be established by [Access to Counsel Legislation](https://www.massrtc.org/) HD3657/SD1082
* **Tenancy Preservation Program** 
  + Will check with program providers about what their request is for FY24
* **MassAccess Registry**
  + Will check with program administrators to ask for their FY24 request
* **Unaccompanied Homeless Youth**
  + Mass. Coalition for the Homeless advocating for $12 million in FY24
* **New Lease for Homeless Families**
  + Will check with New Lease on its FY24 request
* **Additional Budget Requests –** the following topics were raised as potential items to add to the Coalition’s budget advocacy
  + Homeownership related budget priorities that could be added
  + Using the budget to extend Ch. 257 protections – which pauses evictions if there is a pending application for emergency rental assistance. These protections expire in 2023.
  + Advocating for additional administrative funds for DHCD to hire more staff. A common theme of the discussion was DHCD not having enough staff to effectively administer its many programs. This would include adding funding for line-item 7004-0099.
  + Funds to build specialized housing for persons with certain sensitivities