

Massachusetts Campaign to End Child Homelessness

October 26, 2009

The Honorable Deval L. Patrick
Massachusetts State House
Office of the Governor, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Patrick,

We are writing on behalf of the Massachusetts Campaign to End Child Homelessness to ask you to keep the needs of children and families who are homeless in mind as you review FY10 spending reductions. The Massachusetts Campaign is part of the national Campaign to End Child Homelessness, an initiative of The National Center on Family Homelessness.

In light of the current state of the economy, we are aware that tough choices need to be made. We strongly urge you to maintain supports for homeless children and families. Among the most vulnerable in the Commonwealth are the more than 100,000 Massachusetts homeless children and their families who experience homelessness annually. The experience of homelessness can have a devastating and life-long impact on a child; further erosion of the safety net as a result of more budget cuts would cause even more harm to homeless children and their families here in Massachusetts.

How Cuts to Housing Supports Would Hurt Children Who Are Homeless or at Risk of Becoming Homeless

- Cuts to housing supports, including the **Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP, line item 7004-9024)**, would make it that much more difficult for homeless children and their families to escape homelessness, or avoid becoming homeless in the first place.
- Over 2,000 families with children rely on **MRVP** vouchers for their housing. As the result of an existing \$3 million shortfall, up to 700 MRVP vouchers are already in jeopardy. Any additional cut to MRVP would jeopardize even more vouchers, potentially causing more children and their families to become homeless.

How Cuts to Early Education and Care Would Hurt Children Who Are Homeless or at Risk of Becoming Homeless

- About 35,000 low-income Massachusetts children and their families rely on **state-funded early education and care programs through the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC, line items 3000-4050 and 3000-4060)**.

- In spite of the fact that access to EEC financial assistance was recently eliminated for many homeless children, over 1,000 homeless children remain eligible and continue to participate in early education and care through EEC funding.
- Cuts to EEC funding would deprive homeless children and other at-risk children of the opportunity for healthy growth and development. It would also make it much more difficult for homeless families to move towards self-sufficiency and stable housing, and would cause more families living on the verge of homelessness to become homeless.

Inadequate Funding Is Preventing Homeless Children and Their Families from Entering Shelter

- As a result of inadequate funding, income eligibility for **homeless families seeking Emergency Assistance** (line item **7004-0101**) for shelter, re-housing or stabilization assistance has been reduced from a maximum of 130% of the federal poverty level (\$23,803 for a family of three) to 115% (\$21,057).
- Even without further cuts to the Emergency Assistance program, a projected \$50 million funding shortfall already may result in homeless families losing access to Emergency Assistance. We ask you to protect this critical safety net program, at a time when family homelessness is at an all-time high and the state's housing resources are inadequate to meet the needs of children currently experiencing homelessness.

Our hope is that while making your budget decisions, you will remember those most in need: the homeless children and families of Massachusetts. These families need cost-effective housing alternatives to the Commonwealth's already overburdened shelter system—which now houses over 3,000 families, including more than 1,000 who are living in motels—as well as support services to help maintain stable housing, jobs and educational experiences.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Director of the Campaign to End Child Homelessness, Christina Jordan, at 617-969-7146 or Christina.Jordan@familyhomelessness.org. Thank you for your respectful consideration.

Sincerely,

Libby Hayes, Executive Director, Homes for Families
Sue Heilman, Executive Director, Horizons for Homeless Children
Robyn Frost, Executive Director, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
Dr. Ellen Bassuk, President, The National Center on Family Homelessness