



On Solid Ground

2017–2018 Legislative Agenda

The On Solid Ground Coalition is a diverse group of partners committed to improving housing stability and economic mobility for families living in Massachusetts through a cross-sector research, evidence-informed advocacy, and family engagement through 4 main areas of focus. This package of legislation will encourage evidence driven system coordination to better serve households with low-income; help families find housing that is affordable and increase access to necessary support services through data sharing to help all families succeed across the Commonwealth. Areas of focus for the Coalition's efforts:

Advancing System Coordination and Increasing Access to Support Services

An Act Improving Public Health through a Common Application for Core Food, Health and Safety-Net Programs (H.101/ S.612)

Sponsored by Rep. Jay Livingstone & Sen. Sal DiDomenico

This bill will increase access to vital social safety-net programs like SNAP by creating a common application for these resources. The common application will allow individuals to apply in one place for programs including MassHealth, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), income supports, veteran's services benefits, and housing resources.

An Act Providing Immediate Child Care Assistance to Homeless Families (H.2796 / S.257)

Sponsored by Rep. Marjorie Decker & Sen. Linda Dorcea Forry

This legislation will allow families living in homeless shelters to qualify for state-funded child care vouchers, providing children with subsidized early education and parents with a safe environment to leave their children while they pursue employment opportunities. Simply put, it is not feasible to job hunt or go on interviews with a child present; this piece of legislation would provide child care opportunities to homeless parents as soon as they enter shelter, so they can immediately start working to get their families back on a path to success.

An Act to lift the cap on kids (H.85 / S.34)

Sponsored by Rep. Marjorie Decker & Sen. Sal DiDomenico

The Cap on Kids - sometimes called the Family Cap - denies welfare benefits to children conceived while - or soon after - the family received assistance. Welfare benefits are very low - \$578/month for a family of three, but only \$478 if one of the children is excluded by the Cap on Kids. This legislation lifts this cap on kids and increases the access to welfare benefits for families.

Combating Cliff Effects

An Act Relative to the Economic Mobility and Stability Program (H.3020 / S.724)

Sponsored by Rep. Aaron Vega & Sen. Linda Dorcena Forry

This legislation brings together stakeholders to study the many self-sufficiency programs that have been created to help households increase their incomes and build assets. This bill creates a commission to study these programs that will help shape an economic mobility and financial stability program. The commission will also examine the impact of cliff effects and determine ways to adjust assistance in response to changes in income.

Increasing Access to Affordable Housing

An Act Financing the Production & Preservation of Housing for Low & Moderate Income Residents (H.2368)

Sponsored by Rep. Kevin Honan & Sen. Linda Dorcena Forry

This legislation invests \$1.7 billion in an affordable housing bond bill. This five-year authorization will provide critical funding for the production, preservation, and modernization of public and affordable housing in communities across the Commonwealth. The bill also extends the state Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) that will help support the preservation of affordable housing at risk of being lost due to expiring affordability restrictions.

An Act Relative to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (S.719)

Sponsored by Sen. Jamie Eldridge

This bill codifies the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) into the General Laws. Currently, MRVP is only authorized through the annual state budget. Codifying the program will create a more permanent authorization and allow for a more deliberative process through legislation to improve the program as it grows.

Enabling Data Informed Policy

An Act Relative to Interagency Efforts to Reduce and Prevent Homelessness (H.2245 / S.725)

Sponsored by Rep. Byron Rushing & Sen. Linda Dorcena Forry

This legislation, which promotes systems change by directing state agencies to work together in coordinating services for low-income households, also requires these agencies to track and report on data for these programs. The bill will track our resources for low-income families, including housing and homelessness prevention programs, and will require data collection that will help inform how we can continue to improve these programs.

For more information, please contact

Abhidnya, Policy Associate & Coordinator at Citizens' Housing and Planning Association and On Solid Ground Coalition, at akurve@chapa.org or (617) 742-0820.