



ON SOLID GROUND COALITION
BUILDING OPPORTUNITY, PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

June 20, 2018

The Honorable Charlie Baker
Governor of the Commonwealth
24 Beacon Street
The State House, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

RE: FY2019 Budget Recommendations for Homelessness Prevention, Affordable Housing and Childcare and Economic Mobility Programs

Dear Governor Baker,

On behalf of the On Solid Ground Coalition, I am writing to request your support for Homelessness Prevention, Affordable Housing and Childcare and Economic Mobility Programs in the FY2019 budget as approved by the Legislature.

The On Solid Ground is a cross sector group of 40+ partners from diverse fields like housing, homelessness prevention, health, early education, and many more. We are committed to improving housing stability and economic mobility for families living in Massachusetts through cross-sector partnerships, mixed methods research and meaningful family involvement in evidence-informed advocacy.

Specifically, we request that you approve FY2019 budget investments for the following line-items that will help address cross-sector priorities to help families with low incomes in Massachusetts.

- HomeBASE (7004-0108).....\$32,000,000
- Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) (7004-9024).....\$ 100,000,000
- Learn to Earn (7002-1080).....\$ 1,000,000
- Reimbursement Rate Increase for Center-Based Subsidized Early Education and Care (3000-1042).....\$ 20,000,000
- Head Start Programs (3000-5000).....\$ 9,600,000

HomeBASE (7004-0108)

The On Solid Ground Coalition (OSG), requests you to support the increased appropriation of \$32 million for HomeBASE. This will help more homeless families avoid or leave emergency shelters.

OSG also requests you to support the language in the conference budget that makes several important changes to the program. First, the budget allows families to access up to \$10,000 to help avoid or end homelessness. These additional funds will make the program more effective as families work to find stable homes.

Second, the conference language improves data collection and reporting requirements for HomeBASE. Specifically, the language requires DHCD to report on the number of families receiving both Emergency Assistance and HomeBASE benefits in the previous three years. This will allow a better understanding of HomeBASE, how the resource is used, and its success in helping families achieve long-term housing stability.

Third, the Conference budget language removes the \$300,000 cap on the program within HomeBASE that allows survivors of domestic violence or families in substance abuse and

sober living programs access to the resource. This program, in place for the last two years, has helped all families facing homelessness, regardless of the cause, find an affordable home. Removing the cap on the program will ensure that all families in these shelters will be able to access HomeBASE if they are eligible.

Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) (7004-9024)

Thanks to you and the Legislature for increasing support for MRVP. OSG requests you to approve the funding level of \$100 million. These additional funds will help support over 200 new vouchers in the next year. These additional vouchers will help assist more extremely low-income families, seniors, and persons with disabilities find affordable homes. Keeping funding at \$97.5 million will only support the current number of MRVP vouchers. Although no vouchers would be lost, no new vouchers would be made available in FY2019.

Also, we ask that you support language added to MRVP that directs DHCD to continue working on implementing a voucher management system. This will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the program.

Reimbursement Rate Increase for Center-Based Subsidized Early Education and Care (3000-1042)

OSG requests you to approve the \$20 million appropriations for a reimbursement rate increase for center-based subsidized early education and care.

These increases in the rates the state pays to early education centers for each child in subsidized care can help facilitate improvements in salary, benefits, professional development and working conditions for early education teachers.

Headstart Programs (3000-5000)

OSG requests you to support the \$9.6 million appropriations for the Head Start programs across the Commonwealth. This funding promotes school readiness through quality early education and services like health, mental health, nutrition, social services, and parent involvement. The increased funding would support salaries of early educators and strengthen the program to best prepare children for school. Strengthening early education for children gives them opportunities for economic mobility in life.

Finally, we would like to thank you and the Legislature for lifting the Cap on Kids in the TAFDC program and level funding for Learn to Earn Initiative (7002-1080). We are also grateful to you and the Legislature for including an increase to the Massachusetts Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which will raise the match for the state EITC from 23% to 30% of the federal credit. This will benefit working families in the state as the EITC has been proven to increase economic mobility and reduce inequality.

Thank you for your consideration and please free to contact me with any questions you may have about these programs.

Sincerely,



Abhidnya Kurve,

Policy Coordinator

On Solid Ground Coalition