



S.31, AN ACT PROVIDING FOR COORDINATED DATA AND ASSISTANCE TO ADDRESS FAMILY HOMELESSNESS

FILED BY SEN. COMERFORD

- This bill increases data transparency and system coordination by directing state agencies to report on certain homelessness related measures and their current system coordination efforts to improve access to support services to families. The bill also makes benefit program information more accessible to families through an agency telephone hotline and website.

CLIFF EFFECTS ARE BARRIERS TO ECONOMIC MOBILITY FOR FAMILIES

- Massachusetts had the second-largest increase of homeless people in families with children from 2007 to 2018 (increase of 94%). High cost of housing, childcare and stagnated incomes renders many working families homeless. In order to pay for basic needs families often rely on support programs such as housing assistance, childcare assistance, SNAP benefits, Medicaid and TAFDC to maintain stable housing.
- The way many assistance programs are currently set up, families become ineligible for the income supports as they begin to work or get a raise. The loss of a voucher or benefits can leave them worse off than before. These **setbacks** or “**cliff effects**”, are a major barrier for families trying to achieve economic mobility and a path out of homelessness.
- In order to address cliff effects, we need more data on how program are being utilized and how different programs are interconnected as they serve the same families through different agencies. The administration is currently working on multiple cross-agency efforts and streamlining data that will help better understand cliff effects.



Data on programs like MRVP, HomeBASE, Childcare assistance, SNAP, MassHealth can help solve the puzzle on Cliff Effects

DATA TRANSPARENCY & SYSTEM ALIGNMENT ARE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING & ADDRESSING CLIFF EFFECTS

- This bill proposes making the current efforts more transparent through annual reporting on homelessness related measures to be submitted to the Legislature, Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness and Learn to Earn working group. Reporting on utilization of programs like HomeBASE can help better understand the success of the programs as well as identify gaps in services. This can drive better funding and policy decisions to alleviate cliff effects. The bill calls for streamlining data systems between the Executive Offices of Health and Human Services, Housing and Economic Development, Labor and Workforce Development and Education to provide better services and opportunities of economic mobility for families.
- The bill establishes a telephone hotline at state agencies where families can call and receive information on assistance and benefits including eligibility, application processes and the connection between programs as it relates to the families. The hotline and making a benefits calculator tool available online will help make benefit program information more accessible to families thus helping them to access resources better.

For more information, contact
Abhidnya Kurve,
Policy Associate &
Coordinator
CHAPA & On Solid Ground
Coalition, at
akurve@chapa.org 617 910