

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF
HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
ONE ASHBURTON PLACE, ROOM 2101
BOSTON, MA 02108
www.mass.gov/eohed

CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR

KARYN E. POLITO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

MIKE KENNEALY
SECRETARY

TELEPHONE
(617) 788-3610

FACSIMILE
(617) 788-3605

December 28, 2022

The Honorable Aaron M. Michlewitz, Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Michael J. Rodrigues, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Honorable Chairs,

Pursuant to M.G.L Chapter 23B, Section 30, General Appropriations Act (GAA) line item 7004-0101, and 760 CMR 67.00, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) funds and oversees the Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter system. Through a network of nearly 50 non-profit shelter providers, the EA shelter system provides a vital safety net for over 3,500 low-income families every night to ensure eligible families with children and pregnant individuals do not sleep in cars, bus stations, emergency rooms or other places not meant for human habitation.

Due to a combination of decreased exits out of shelter and increased entries into shelter – driven by both a challenging housing market for long-time residents and new arrivals into the state as a result of federal immigration policy – the EA system has been operating for the past several months with few open shelter units. Since August 2022, the Baker-Polito Administration has deployed a cross-secretariat approach to this challenge, working across various state agencies to identify and establish potential sites for additional shelter. These expansion efforts include the repurposing of dorm space at Salem State University, establishing a temporary emergency intake center for families on state-owned land at Devens, securing new scattered site apartments across the state, and, when necessary, placing families in hotels with onsite social services staff. Throughout this expansion, the Administration has worked closely with municipal partners to address concerns they may have about the establishment of shelters in their communities.

On November 18, 2022, Governor Baker filed H. 5394 seeking \$139 million in FY23 supplemental funding, with \$130 million proposed specifically to address the challenges facing the EA system. We understand that this bill remains pending before House Ways and Means,

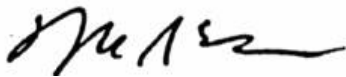
despite some productive conversations with your respective committees. Meanwhile, DHCD has fully committed funding through FY23 GAA line item 7004-0101 and the supplemental funding made available last month through Chapter 268 of the Acts of 2022, as communicated to committee staff via email on December 20, 2022.

Line item 7004-0101 of the FY23 Budget provides that this account shall be subject to appropriation, and in the event of a deficiency nothing in this item shall give rise to or shall be construed as giving rise to any enforceable right or entitlement to services in excess of the amounts appropriated in this item. Item 7004-0101 further requires the Department to submit a report to the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means, the Clerks of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities before implementing any administrative practices that would alter eligibility or the level of benefits under this program, other than that which would benefit the clients.

Due to insufficient current funding levels, DHCD hereby formally notifies the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means that the Department anticipates that within 90 days it will not be able to immediately place all eligible families into EA shelter. The agency will continue to fund and operate the existing network of 3,500 shelter units, but will have to cease all efforts to further expand the number of available shelter units. At that time, placements of new families into shelter will be possible solely upon availability of suitable shelter units. Without adequate appropriations to expand capacity, it is probable that the EA system will be unable to accommodate families who otherwise would be forced to remain in unsafe situations or sleep in cars, emergency rooms or other places not intended for human habitation. We believe this underscores the importance of acting on H. 5394 before the end of the legislative session on Tuesday, January 3.

Should you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



Mike Kennealy
Secretary, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED)



Jennifer D. Maddox
Undersecretary, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

With Copy to:

The Honorable Senate President Karen Spilka

The Honorable House Speaker Ronald Mariano

The Honorable Senate Minority Leader Bruce E. Tarr

The Honorable House Minority Leader Bradley H. Jones, Jr

The Honorable Senate Chair John F. Keenan, Joint Committee on Housing

The Honorable House Chair James Arciero, Joint Committee on Housing

The Honorable Senate Chair Adam Gomez, Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities

The Honorable House Chair Michael J. Finn, Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities