

# Housing Solutions Campaign

Action for Boston Community Development

Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness

AIDS Housing Corporation

Asian Community Development Corporation

Boston Tenant Coalition

Central Mass. Housing Alliance

Citizens' Housing and Planning Association

City Life/Vida Urbana

Community Teamwork Inc.

Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries

Crittenton Women's Union

Crossroads Family Shelter

Family Economic Initiative

Fair Housing Center of Gr. Boston

Franklin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority

Hearth

Home Funders Collaborative

Homes for Families

House of Hope

Housing Families Inc.

Mass. Alliance on Teen Pregnancy

Mass. Association of Community Development Corporations

Mass. Association of Older Americans

Mass. Coalition for the Homeless

Mass. Housing and Shelter Alliance

Mass. Law Reform Institute

Mass. Nonprofit Housing Association

Medford Community Housing

Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership

National Association of Social Workers MA

Neighbor to Neighbor

Pine Street Inn

Project Hope

Rosie's Place

Rural Development Inc.

Shelburne Housing Authority

Somerville Homeless Coalition

Travelers Aid Family Services

Wellspring House

Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development

Women's Lunch Place

## Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program

The MA Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) provides low income households with assistance in paying their rent and helps developers build housing that is affordable to this population.

### FY10 BUDGET REQUEST \$40 million for MRVP (7004-9024) will:

- Preserve the 5,100 existing homes currently leased with MRVP (\$36 m)
- Restore an additional 400 housing opportunities for families, people with disabilities, seniors and others in need (\$4 m)
- Aim the state back in the direction of providing funding for the program sufficient to meet the need

### THE CHALLENGE:

- **Extremely low income households cannot afford the high cost of rent in Massachusetts.** Households currently enrolled in MRVP have an *average household income of \$958 per month*.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the fair market rent for a *two-bedroom apartment in Massachusetts can be as high as \$1,345*.<sup>2</sup> Rents are significantly higher than incomes, making housing unaffordable to many.
- **The state's family shelter system is operating beyond capacity.** As a result of our state's high housing costs, over 2,600 families are residing in state-funded shelters, over 650 of which are hotels and motels. The cost to the Commonwealth of sheltering these families averages \$3,000 per month, while the average MRVP voucher cost is less than \$600 per month.
- **Building housing for struggling households will benefit the state's economy.** Funding additional rental vouchers will stabilize communities by allowing developers to create construction and related jobs, boosting our state's economy. Developing affordable housing requires rental subsidies in order for this housing to reach households with extremely low incomes. These vouchers will also assist small landlords by providing a steady stream of rental income during this economic recession.

### THE SOLUTION:

**Fund MRVP (7004-9024) at \$40 million to help low income working families, the disabled, seniors and others experiencing housing uncertainties to avoid entering shelter and to quickly move homeless households into stable housing, providing a cost-effective alternative to shelter that bridges the widening housing affordability gap for low income residents.**

## **SUGGESTED ADJUSTMENTS TO THE PROGRAM:**

- Base eligibility for MRVP on area median income (AMI) rather than the federal poverty level (FPL). This change will reflect the differences in rent across the Commonwealth.
- Help stabilize households by allowing participants to keep subsidies until their income increases to the point where they are able to pay their full rent without a subsidy for six months.
- Increase the administrative fee to \$40 per voucher per month, so that administering agencies can pay for the costs of helping households obtain and maintain stable housing.
- Help households gain economic stability by limiting their portion of rent to no more than 35% of their income if utilities are included and 30% of their income if utilities are not included.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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<sup>1</sup>Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, sample survey, 2005.

<sup>2</sup>US Department of Housing and Urban Development, October, 2008.

<sup>3</sup>*Bringing Children in from the Cold*. The Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program & Medical-Legal Partnership for Children at Boston Medical Center. October, 2008

<sup>4</sup>Time Magazine, *Briefing: Low-income Children Left Behind*. December 10, 2007. Full report available at: <http://www.aecf.org/upload/PublicationFiles/lowincomewellbeing.pdf>