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October 17, 2008

Commissioner Julia Kehoe
Department of Transitional Assistance
600 Washington, Street
Boston, MA 02111

Dear Commissioner Kehoe,

We, the Roman Catholic Bishops of Massachusetts, write to ask for your support for increased funding and a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for the Emergency Aid to Elders, the Disabled and Children (EAEDC) program in the FY 2010 budget submission being made by your office. The cash and medical benefits provided by this program are invaluable to the 17,000 income eligible individuals who receive these benefits each year.

EAEDC is a vital program that serves some of the most vulnerable in the Commonwealth. It helps older persons and persons with disabilities coping with serious medical emergencies, including those affecting mental health. EAEDC assistance enables these persons to afford housing and to have their medical expenses covered while navigating the social security application process.

The FY '09 budget funded this program at \$72.4 million, which was a slight increase over the FY '08 funding of \$72.2 million. This amount was still far short of the \$76 million needed according to the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA).

More importantly EAEDC recipients have not been granted a COLA in the amount received for twenty-one (21) years. The maximum grant given today is \$563.00 below the Federal Poverty Line. For each EAEDC recipient who successfully converts to Social Security Insurance (SSI), the federal government reimburses the State's General Fund for 100% of the EAEDC payments made. While this reimbursement is \$14 - \$15 million annually, not one penny has gone back into the program as a cost of living adjustment.

With the high cost in fuel, utilities, and food, and the economic downturn, we are very concerned that more and more of this vulnerable population will not be able to maintain their housing and meet their daily basic human needs.

We ask that in your budget submission for Line Item-4408-1000, Emergency Aid to Elderly, Disabled and Children's program you request at least the \$76 million estimated to be needed for the current fiscal year by DTA and ask that a provision be made for an annual increment as a cost of living adjustment.

In these extremely hard financial times, we ask that you do not forget those in our communities with the greatest need.

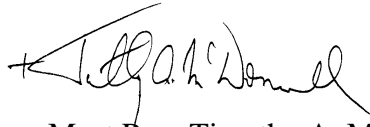
Thank you for your consideration of this request.



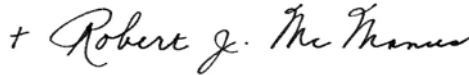
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