

Abby Kelley Foster House, Inc.  
Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness  
Arise for Social Justice  
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center  
Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program  
Boston Medical Center Grow Clinic for Children  
Boston Tenant Coalition  
Bridge Over Troubled Waters  
Cambridge Cares About AIDS  
Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Boston  
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Springfield  
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Worcester  
Catholic Social Services, Diocese of Fall River  
Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance  
Children's Health Watch (Formerly C-SNAP)  
Children's League of Massachusetts  
Children's Services of Roxbury, Inc.  
Citizens for Adequate Housing, Inc.  
City Life/Vida Urbana  
Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries  
Dare Family Services  
Diocese of Western Massachusetts Episcopal Church  
Disability Law Center  
Elizabeth Freeman Center  
Emmaus, Inc.  
Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts  
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America  
Family Economic Initiative  
Greater Boston Legal Services  
Homes for Families  
Horizons for Homeless Children  
Housing Families Inc.  
Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Worcester  
Jane Doe, Inc.  
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston  
Justice Resource Institute  
Latham Centers, Inc.  
Lazarus House  
Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts  
Lutheran Social Services of New England  
Lynn Clergy and Religious Association  
MA Conference United Church of Christ- Taskforce to End Homelessness /Commission on Mission & Justice  
Massachusetts Advocates for Children  
Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy  
Massachusetts Catholic Conference of Bishops  
Massachusetts Citizens for Children  
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless  
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute  
Mass. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children  
Medical-Legal Partnership I Boston  
MetroWest Legal Services  
MetroWest Outreach Connection  
Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary  
Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center  
National Association of Social Workers – Mass. Chapter  
National Center on Family Homelessness  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Organization for Women – Mass. Chapter  
National Student Partnerships – Somerville  
Neighbor to Neighbor Massachusetts  
Neighborhood Legal Services  
New England Conference, United Methodist Church  
New England Home for Little Wanderers  
Poor People's United Fund  
Project Hope  
Rosie's Place  
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Boston Province  
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Ipswich Province  
Sisters of Saint Anne, Marlborough  
Somerville Homeless Coalition  
South Coastal Counties Legal Services  
St. Mary's Women and Children's Center  
Travelers Aid Family Services  
Tri-City Community Action Program, Inc.  
Unitarian Universalist Massachusetts Action Network  
Wayside Youth & Family Support Network  
Western Massachusetts Legal Services  
Women's Bar Association  
Women's Institute for Housing & Economic Development

March 11, 2009

His Excellency Deval Patrick  
Governor, Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
State House – Room 360  
Boston, MA 02133

**Re: Access to Shelter for Families Experiencing Homelessness**

Dear Governor Patrick,

As organizations from across the Commonwealth that are committed on a daily basis to ensuring the well being of low-income children and their families, we have come together to respectfully ask this Administration to withdraw its proposal to implement family shelter regulations that will restrict access for families experiencing homelessness.

Families throughout Massachusetts are struggling during our nation's economic downturn, with those at the lowest income levels losing their housing in unprecedented numbers. That is why we have grave concerns over the Administration's proposal to implement new Emergency Assistance regulations that will limit homeless families' access to shelter and prevention services. According to your own Administration's estimates, hundreds of children and their parents will become ineligible for assistance as a result of these proposed changes.

We fully understand that these are very difficult fiscal times and that the Emergency Assistance program is running a deficit because of dramatic increases in the number of families needing assistance. However, at a time when the Commonwealth is committed to eradicating homelessness, we should not reduce access to the state's safety-net that keeps children and their parents out of harm's way.

Thankfully, with the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the Commonwealth will be receiving more than \$17M of additional federal funding under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant for this fiscal year, as well as more than \$23M of such funding next fiscal year. This funding is specifically intended to help states offset the increased cost of providing safety-net assistance to low-income children and their families. In addition, the Commonwealth will be receiving tens of millions of dollars in additional Emergency Shelter Grant funding that can be used to pay for services funded through the family shelter account that are intended to help homeless families be rapidly re-housed. Funds from both of these sources can be used to close the \$3.4M deficit in the EA account or to replenish funds used for that purpose if the federal funds do not flow before April 1<sup>st</sup>. These new federal funds, in combination with the upcoming implementation of new regional housing entities that will pilot innovative and positive ways to reduce homelessness and the new family shelter contract procurement that puts an emphasis on rapid re-housing and stabilization, will likely reduce the demand for emergency shelter in FY'10 without the need for harmful eligibility restrictions.

We applaud the Administration's efforts to move households who are at-risk or experiencing homelessness more quickly into permanent housing, including the Administration's plan to give the Department of Housing and Community Development responsibility for finding housing for homeless and at-risk individuals and families. All of us look forward to the day when we no longer need family emergency shelter ... to a time when everyone has a place to call home and access to prevention programs to ensure they are able to maintain their housing when times are difficult. But, sadly we are not yet there!

We therefore respectfully ask for your leadership in ensuring that these harmful eligibility restrictions are withdrawn and not put into effect.

Sincerely,

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