



Regional Housing Network of Massachusetts Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Priorities

1. Housing Consumer Education Centers, Line Item 7004-3036

RHN FY 15 Funding Request: \$2.6 million	Governor's FY 15 Request: \$2.6 million
FY 14 Funding: \$2.6 million	

The *Housing Consumer Education Centers* (HCECs) are the gateway for households to access housing-relating funding and services. They also provide core staff and access to other funds for services such as first-time homebuyer training and foreclosure prevention counseling. The HCECs provide critical services statewide at nine regional centers that are accessible in person, by phone, and online. They were established to offer proactive housing education for landlords, tenants, homeowners and homebuyers. Their mission is to serve Massachusetts residents at all income levels, helping people make the essential connections to housing and related supports.

Over the past several years, the primary focus of the HCECs has been providing immediate assistance to a growing number of households in crisis. In Fiscal Year 2013, more than 13,750 households who were homeless or at risk of homelessness sought assistance. The Network's recommended funding for the HCECs in FY 2015 will allow the Centers to retain existing expertise and capacity to serve a client base with increasingly critical needs, and continue to reach out with more proactive efforts throughout the regions.

The HCECs provide the critical professional staff to connect families and individuals facing housing problems with available and appropriate assistance.

2. Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), Line Item 7004-9024

RHN FY 15 Funding Request: \$87.5 million	Governor's FY 15 Request: \$57.5 million
FY 14 Funding: \$57.5 million	

The majority of households that are homeless or at risk simply do not have sufficient income to pay for housing. There are more than 200,000 low income households in Massachusetts that are paying more than 50% of their incomes in rent. The need for subsidized housing greatly exceeds supply. Rental Assistance is the quickest, most efficient method of bridging that gap. MRVP ensures access to safe, decent, affordable apartments in all communities for households with extremely low incomes, and it provides stable income for landlords who house lower income families. RHN's funding request will ensure secure housing for the 7,000 families, disabled individuals and elders that are being assisted this year as well as provide assistance for an additional 2,000 households. New project-based vouchers will provide the operating support needed to produce additional housing units accessible to extremely low-income families and individuals. Funding for the HomeBASE rental assistance program is being eliminated in FY 15; the \$30 million savings in this line item should stay in the housing budget and be used to restore MRVP.

3. Residential Assistance for Families in Transition, Line Item 7004-9316

RHN FY 15 Funding Request: \$12 million	Governor's FY 15 Request: \$9.5 million
FY 14 Funding: \$10 million	

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) provides critical flexible funds to help extremely low income families avoid homelessness or re-establish tenancies. Eligible families may receive up to \$4,000 within a 12-month period; although average spending per family this year has been \$2,430. RAFT has prevented over 1,800 families from becoming homeless during the first six months of operation this year. RHN is also requesting a language change that would allow more RAFT funds to be used for households earning between 30% and 50% of area median income. This change would help more families stabilize their housing before they are destitute, reducing the likelihood of becoming homeless.

4. Public Housing Operating Subsidy, Line Item 7004-9005

RHN FY 15 Funding Request: \$82 million	Governor's FY 15 Request: \$64.2 million
FY 14 Funding: \$64.4 million	

Public housing offers the most stable and cost-effective affordable housing option for very low-income households in the Commonwealth. In 2008, DHCD determined that the real cost of operating the state's public housing portfolio required an operating subsidy of \$115 million, or \$124.4 million adjusted for inflation, far less than the \$82 million requested by our Network but more than the Governor's request of \$64.2 million. Funding for public housing is inadequate to maintain units and provide necessary services for families, seniors, and people with disabilities.

5. Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP), Line Item 7004-3045

RHN FY15 Funding Request: \$750,000	Governor's FY 15 Request: \$500,000
FY 14 Funding: \$500,000	

TPP prevents homelessness among people with disabilities by working with landlords and tenants and providing clinical consultation services to the Housing Court. The program is extremely cost effective, stabilizing 87% of households served with an average cost of \$2,950 per case. \$750,000 would provide approximately 650 households with TPP services.

For more information, please contact Maureen Fitzgerald of the *Regional Housing Network* 617-367-9798 or Brian Scales of *RCAP Solutions* at 978-630-6649.