

HOUSING CONSUMER EDUCATION CENTERS

Line Item 7004-3036 Regional Housing Network Budget Request: \$2.6 million



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The Commonwealth's nine **Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs)** are the front line for housing crisis response in the Commonwealth. They are an essential element in the delivery system for other state-funded programs, including RAFT and HomeBASE. HCEC staff assesses the needs of families facing immediate housing crises and helps them develop solutions. During the first six months of this fiscal year, the HCECs assisted 5,400 families at risk of homelessness or seeking shelter. HCEC staff are accessible in person, by phone, and online in all regions of the state.

HCECs also offer proactive housing education for landlords, tenants, homeowners, and homebuyers. Their mission is to ensure access to safe, stable and sustainable housing for Massachusetts residents at all income levels. Staff at the HCECs help people make essential connections to housing and related supports. The ongoing housing crisis has increased the need for these services, but funding to meet that need has not kept up with demand.

REQUEST Fiscal Year 2015: \$2.6 Million

Support Line Item 7004-3036 in the amount of \$2.6 million to continue "the operation of nine regional Housing Consumer Education Centers operated by the regional nonprofit housing agencies." This level funding will allow HCECs to serve their original purpose and meet the continued demand for services from individuals and families at urgent risk of homelessness.

- Over the last ten years, HCECs have assisted more than 46,000 households per year on average and **at a cost of less than \$28 per household**. In the *first six months of this fiscal year alone*, we have already served more than 31,300 households.
- In comparison to the first six months of last year, we have seen an increase of almost 10% in the number of people seeking help due to eviction, with 6,676 households assisted.

Assisting people in crisis requires more time-intensive counseling by professional staff and strains the ability of the HCECs to provide broad-based proactive education through group meetings and workshops. Level funding will maintain crisis prevention and housing education services, which will result in fewer evictions and foreclosures and take pressure off Housing Courts and other state services.

We ask you to maintain our ability to serve the residents of the Commonwealth through this established and cost effective program
by providing \$2.6 million in FY 2015 HCEC funding for the nine regional agencies.

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