

Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program

The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) (line item 7004-9024) provides very low income households with assistance in paying their rent and helps create new affordable housing for this population.

FISCAL YEAR 2015 FUNDING REQUEST: \$87.5 MILLION

The Problem:

- The gap between incomes and the high cost of housing continues to persist for many Massachusetts residents. 2011 data from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities showed 229,600 low-income renters in the Commonwealth paying more than half of their monthly income for housing costs.
- The median income of this group is \$1,300 per month, with median housing costs of \$1,170, leaving just \$130 per month for food and other necessities.
- These households have no margin for error—common setbacks such as job loss, illness, lack of child care or missed child support payments can and do result in eviction and homelessness, resulting in crisis for families, and the need for expensive, long-term public support.
- Short-term programs such as RAFT and HomeBASE offer essential resources to meet the needs of households in crisis, but they do not address the fundamental disparity between median income and housing affordability, and do not provide a long-term solution.

Towards a Solution:

Funding MRVP at \$87.5 million would:

- Maintain stable housing for the more than 7,000 elders, people with disabilities, and low income families that currently rely on MRVP for a portion of their rent. With an average monthly income of just over \$900, all of these tenants would be at risk without this assistance.
- Provide more than 2,000 additional individuals and families with affordable apartments, creating stable home environments for more families, allowing parents to be successful at work, and their children to be successful in school.
- Transfer funds that provided a temporary solution for some families to a program that provides more stable long-term assistance. HomeBASE Rental Assistance is being eliminated in Fiscal Year 2015, producing a savings of \$30 million. These funds should stay in the housing budget and be used toward restoring MRVP.
- Allow more vouchers to be dedicated to supportive housing projects, which provide both social services and rental assistance to low-income households with special needs to help them maintain stable living situations.
- Assist small property owners by providing a reliable rental stream, allowing them to maintain their mortgages and circulate resources into the local economy.

We appreciate your support for this cost-effective solution to housing instability.

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.