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Massachusetts Campaign to End Child Homelessness

The Massachusetts Campaign to End Child Homelessness is part of the National Center on Family Homelessness' Campaign to End Child Homelessness, in partnership with Homes for Families, Horizons for Homeless Children, and the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless. The Campaign seeks to increase public awareness of child homelessness, inform state and federal policies, and improve services to prevent and end child homelessness.

Here in Massachusetts, imminent state budget cuts threaten a broad range of supports for vulnerable children, families and individuals. **Among the most vulnerable in the Commonwealth are the more than 100,000 Massachusetts homeless children and their families who experience homelessness annually.**¹ The experience of homelessness can have a devastating and life-long impact on a child; further erosion of the safety net as a result of more budget cuts would cause even more harm to homeless children and their families in Massachusetts.

How Cuts to Housing Supports Would Hurt Children Who Are Homeless or at Risk of Becoming Homeless

- Cuts to housing supports, including the **Mass. Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)** and the **Residential Assistance to Families in Transition (RAFT)** program, would make it that much more difficult for homeless children and their families to escape homelessness, or avoid becoming homeless in the first place.
- Over 2,000 families with children rely on **MRVP** vouchers for their housing. As the result of an existing \$3 million shortfall, up to 700 MRVP vouchers are already in jeopardy. Any additional cut to MRVP would jeopardize even more vouchers, potentially causing more children and their families to become homeless.
- **RAFT** is short-term housing assistance that helps families who are behind on rent, mortgage payments, or utility bills; RAFT also helps families who are trying to move into permanent housing but do not have enough money to pay a security deposit, utility startup costs, or first/last month's rent. Any cuts to RAFT funding would make it even more difficult for children and their families to move out of shelter into permanent housing, and would also cause more families on the verge of homelessness to become homeless.

How Cuts to Early Education and Care Would Hurt Children Who Are Homeless or at Risk of Becoming Homeless

¹ Based on data from the Mass. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, which show that more than 50,000 school-age children in Massachusetts are homeless on any given day. See www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org/Statistics_Breaking_News.asp for background.

- About 35,000 low-income Massachusetts children and their families rely on **state-funded early education and care programs through the Dept. of Early Education and Care (EEC)**.
- In spite of the fact that access to EEC financial assistance was recently eliminated for many homeless children, thousands of homeless children remain eligible and continue to participate in early education and care through EEC funding.
- Access to high-quality early education and care is a proven intervention that can reduce the short-term and long-term harm experienced by homeless children. It also makes it possible for their parents to find and keep a job, making it possible to move towards self-sufficiency and stable housing.
- Cuts to EEC funding would deprive homeless children and other at-risk children of the opportunity for healthy growth and development. It would also make it much more difficult for homeless families to move towards self-sufficiency and stable housing, and would cause more families living on the verge of homelessness to become homeless.

Inadequate Funding Is Preventing Homeless Children and Their Families from Entering Shelter

- As a result of inadequate funding, income eligibility for **homeless families seeking Emergency Assistance** for shelter, re-housing or stabilization assistance has been reduced from a maximum of 130% of the federal poverty level (\$23,803 for a family of three) to 115% (\$21,057).
- Now, inadequate funding threatens to bar even more homeless families from receiving shelter, re-housing assistance, and stabilization services. A projected \$50 million funding shortfall may result in homeless families losing access to Emergency Assistance family homeless shelters, and/or facing waiting lists to access shelters or shelter stay time limits – unless the Governor seeks, and the Legislature approves, \$50 million in supplemental funding to close this gap.