



Letters to the editor

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Ending family homelessness urgent

As an organization that has worked with thousands of homeless families, Metro Housing Boston knows that a motel is no place for a family to live. Gov. Baker is therefore to be commended for setting a goal and ensuring that it was met.

However, instead of focusing on affordable housing options and permanent homes for these families, the Commonwealth has replaced motels with an expanded shelter system. Case in point: The emergency shelter capacity in Massachusetts has increased more than 250 percent, from 993 families in 2000 to more than 3,500 families today. And the typical metro Boston family stays in a shelter nearly one year.

It is clear that permanent housing is better than more shelters. And yet the majority of subsidized housing being built is not available to families who are homeless. At Metro Housing Boston, there are 35,000 families waiting for a housing assistance voucher. The family at the top of that wait list applied 10 years ago. Clearly, families cannot live in homes that do not exist.

Now that nearly all homeless families are out of motels, the next step is to get serious about actually ending family homelessness. We need to do more to end homelessness rather than just manage it.

Our leaders need to decide to build more housing that is affordable to families who are homeless and to promote policies such as education, childcare and transportation that support opportunities to work.

— **Christopher Norris**, Executive Director, Metro Housing|Boston