



FY2021 KEY BUDGET PRIORITIES

as of February 3, 2020

Housing Consumer Education Centers, Line Item 7004-3036

FY21 Funding Request: \$4 million

FY21 Governor's Proposed Budget: 3.75 million

FY20: \$3.75 million

The Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC) is the front line for people across the state facing a housing crisis. The HCEC line item funds organizational staff which allows for access to an array of resources for homelessness prevention services such as RAFT. The past year has seen a greater number and more complex cases, with specific focus on one-on-one counseling. HCEC funds provide critical capacity that leverages additional funding such as federal housing counseling and financial assistance, private charitable and foundation support; and other state and local grants and contracts. Additionally, HCEC services work hand in hand with the RAFT program. HCEC and RAFT together represent a fully integrated model that allows RAFT participants to receive an holistic housing services approach that enhances economic mobility.

Access to these additional services for households of all incomes depends on the state's HCEC funds. During Fiscal Year 2019, HCECs across the state assisted more than 57,000 people with their housing crises through counseling sessions, walk-ins, workshops, and phone calls. **With increased funding to \$4 million, HCECs will be able to further increase staffing and provide additional support for the thousands of Massachusetts households in need of housing supports.**

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

FY21 Funding Request: \$27 million

FY21 Governor's Proposed Budget: \$21 million

FY20: \$23.3 million

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) provides flexible funds to help families with very low and extremely low incomes avoid homelessness or re-establish tenancies. Eligible families may receive up to \$4,000 within a 12-month period. During FY19 more than 6,400 households received assistance, with an average of \$2,720 per family. We ask the Legislature to maintain the definition of family to cover households of all sizes and configurations thereby allowing unaccompanied adults and those without children in the household to access these homelessness prevention resources. We also ask the Legislature to maintain support for the upstream RAFT component that is currently being piloted, allowing households to avoid the trauma and expense of court proceedings resulting from rent arrearages. **The request of \$27 million includes the \$7 million for the upstream pilot for rent and mortgage arrears.**

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

FY21 Funding Request: \$135 million

FY21 Governor's Proposed Budget: \$120 million

FY20: \$116 million

The majority of households that are homeless or at risk of homelessness do not have sufficient income to pay for housing. Rent levels across the state continue to outpace income, low vacancy rates further drive rents higher, and continued development pressures families to move further from employment opportunities and transportation options. Rental assistance is the quickest, most efficient method of bridging that income gap. **Funding at \$135 million will increase the number of vouchers, help preserve affordable developments, and allow DHCD to make programmatic fixes that will make vouchers more usable.** It will help tenants achieve greater stability in their housing, help increase participant mobility, and reduce lease-up times.

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