

Building Blocks Coalition Meeting Notes
March 30, 2023
1:00–2:30 p.m.

Program	FY2024 Requests	Governor's FY2024 Budget	FY2023 Budget
Mass. Rental Voucher Program	\$250,000,000	\$168,247,567	\$154,000,000†
Alternative Housing Voucher Program	\$26,000,000	\$14,108,528	\$13,685,355‡
Residential Assistance for Families in Transition	\$250,000,000	\$162,602,462	\$150,000,000*
Public Housing Operating	\$184,000,000	\$92,000,000	\$92,000,000
Housing Consumer Education Centers	\$10,185,000	\$8,774,000	\$9,700,000
Public Housing Reform	\$7,700,000	\$2,200,000	\$1,000,000
Home & Healthy for Good	\$8,390,000	\$4,162,300	\$6,390,000
HomeBASE	\$60,000,000	\$42,070,445	\$59,411,201
Foreclosure & Housing Counseling	\$3,050,000	\$1,500,000	\$3,050,000
Access to Counsel Program	\$7,000,000	-	-
Tenancy Preservation Program	\$2,042,755	\$2,042,755	\$1,800,000
MassAccess Registry	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth	\$12,000,000	\$10,545,850	\$9,500,000
New Lease for Homeless Families	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000

† Includes language to carryover unspent funds from FY22 bringing total FY23 funding for MRVP to an estimated \$175 million

‡ Includes language to carryover unspent funds from FY22 bringing total FY23 funding for AHVP to an estimated \$19.2 million

* An estimated \$60 million in unspent RAFT funds from FY22 will carry over into FY23 bringing total FY23 funding for RAFT to an estimated \$210 million

- **Background**
 - **Budget Process**
 - Governor Healey released her FY2024 budget proposal on March 1.
 - Joint Committee on Ways & Means hosting a series of hearings on the Governor's proposal where Administration officials will testify. The public will not be able to testify at these but there will be a Ways & Means Committee hearing specifically for the public to testify.
 - **March 31st:** Budget hearing on housing to be co-chaired by Senator Lydia Edwards. Hearing will be held in Gloucester.
 - Will submit questions to Sen. Edwards to direct towards Undersecretary Maddox on public housing, RAFT, MRVP, etc.
 - [April 10th, 11:00 a.m.:](#) Public Hearing on the budget hosted virtually and at Gardner Auditorium in the State House. You can register to testify in-person or virtually at the link above.
 - **April 11th-12th:** House Ways & Means expected to release its FY2024 budget proposal.
 - **April 14, 5:00 p.m.:** Expected deadline to file amendments to the House Budget
 - **April 24th-28th:** House Budget Debate Week
 - **Week of May 8th or 15th:** Senate Ways & Means Budget Release & Bill Filing Deadline
 - **May 22nd-26th:** Senate Budget Debate Week
 - **Next Building Blocks Meeting:** April 13, 1:00-2:30 p.m., following release of House Ways & Means Budget
 - **Note:** The Coalition discussed potential amendment sponsors for our programs, should we need to file amendments following the release of the House Ways & Means Budget. However, those potential sponsor names are not included here so that we can approach those legislators to ask and confirm any sponsor before sharing those names.
- **Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)**
 - FY2024 Request: \$250 million
 - Governor's FY2024 budget proposal included \$168 million for MRVP. That number does not include the estimated \$19 million from FY2023 that the Governor expects to carry over into FY2024.
 - This could bring total funding in FY2024 for MRVP for the Governor's budget proposal to about \$187.2 million

- However, Governor’s budget proposal doesn’t include prior appropriation continued (PAC) language to guarantee this carryover of funds
- DHCD Proposed Voucher Allocations for FY2024:

Voucher Type	# of Vouchers
Project Based Vouchers for MassHousing 3% Set-Asides for Clients of Dep’t of Mental Health & Dep’t of Developmental Services	300
Additional Project Based Vouchers to Affordable Housing Development	200
Mobile Vouchers to be Distributed thru CHAMP	250
Total New MRVP Vouchers Issued/Awarded in FY2024	750

- DHCD anticipates that the full budget impact of these new vouchers and program changes will hit in FY2025 and will draw down the budget surplus
- Budget amendments will be focused on funding and language amendment to authorize small area fair market rents and payment standards using up to 120% of either fair market rents or small area fair market rents
- Small Area Fair Market Rents
 - Governor’s budget language includes authorization to use small area fair market rents
 - DHCD still looking into how to accomplish this so it wouldn’t be an immediate shift from using payment standards to using small area fair market rents
 - The use of small area fair market rents is something CHAPA and others in the coalition have been advocating for and is included in the bill to codify MRVP (H.1351/S.888)
 - DHCD plans to set the payment standard at 100% of the small area fair market rent pending final analysis of costs/impacts of change.
- Payment Standards
 - Governor’s budget language would set payment standards to use 100% of either the fair market rent or small area fair market rent
 - Regional Housing Network, CHAPA, and other members of the coalition support language in the budget to allow payment standards to be set using 120% of either the fair market rent or small area fair market rent
 - This would help participants lease available homes more easily in higher-rent markets

- Note: payment standards only apply to mobile vouchers. Project based voucher rents can be set differently.
 - Security Deposits:
 - DHCD reports that MRVP will begin to pay security deposits, likely starting 1/1/24
 - Process will involve a promissory note that participants in housing search can give to prospective owners. The security deposit will be paid with first subsidy payment after move-in
 - Security deposit will be returned to the participant
 - MRVP participants will only be able to access security deposit once during their households participation in MRVP
 - Administrative Fees
 - DHCD plans to start paying administering agencies a \$500 administrative fee when a newly issued mobile voucher leases
 - This will help to compensate administering agencies for their work on tenant selection, eligibility, issuance, and leasing
 - Waiver Language
 - Governor's budget language would also allow DHCD the discretion to increase the fair market rent both as a reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities or for other reasons at its discretion
 - This could provide greater flexibility for certain participants
 - Tenant Rent Share
 - The coalition will be working to ensure that tenant rent share remains at 30% of a household's income during the first year of participation in the program
- **Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP)**
 - FY2024 Request: \$26 million (\$16.2 million + carry over funds)
 - The FY2023 surplus number expected to carry over into FY2024 is slightly less than \$10 million
 - The Governor's budget included language changes to allow the project basing of vouchers to build new affordable and accessible homes and to allow AHVP to use a payment standard for rents instead of maximum/ceiling rents
 - CHAPA and other organizations are supportive of these change and worked to file legislation this session that also proposed these same program changes (H.1305/S.884)
 - We will advocate for this language to be included in the final budget

- **Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)**
 - FY2024 Request: \$250 million
 - The Governor’s budget proposes cutting benefits from \$10,000 annual to \$7,000 over two years – or \$3,500 annually
 - This would be lower than the RAFT benefit limit of \$4,000 before the pandemic
 - We will oppose limiting the benefit cap to \$7,000 over two years, as proposed by the Governor
 - Amendments will likely focus on:
 - Funding of \$250 million
 - Language to keep the benefit limit cap of at least \$10,000 annually and to avoid the drop in the benefit cap to \$7,000, which goes into effect on July 1, 2023
 - Language to explicitly remove the requirement for a notice to quit or utility shut off in order to apply for RAFT
- **Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs)**
 - FY2024 Request: \$10.185 million
 - HCECs are requesting a 5% increase to its line-item to support the work of HCECs, the Regional Housing Network of Massachusetts, and its Housing Stabilization program – this would bring line-item to \$10,185,000
 - Governor proposed \$8.7 million for HCECs – a cut from the \$9.7 million in FY23
- **Public Housing Operating**
 - FY2024 Request: \$184 million
 - Supporting an ask doubling the public housing operating line from \$92 million to \$184 million
 - United request of Mass. Union of Public Housing Tenants, MassNAHRO, CHAPA, and Greater Boston Interfaith Organization who are building a strong advocacy around this request
 - Governor proposed level funding for public housing, which would actually result in a cut to public housing with inflationary costs
- **Public Housing Reform**
 - FY2024 Request: \$7.7 million
 - Mass. Union of Public Housing Tenants is asking for \$7.7 million for the public housing reform line to support tenants. CHAPA supports this request
 - Gov’s Budget proposed \$2.2 million

- This would be an increase from \$1 million for public housing reform in FY2023.
 - According to DHCD, the increase would be to support the implementation of a centralized screening process for eligibility for public housing.
 - Currently, each housing authority does its own eligibility screening. Centralizing the process will improve administrative efficiency, consistency, and help speed the processing of applications.
 - The requested \$7.7 million would support the implementation of programs to:
 - Improve the health and welfare of residents
 - \$1,081,750 for local tenant organizations
 - \$1,036,800 for a resident maintenance assistant pilot program for residents to receive stipends to assist maintenance departments
 - \$2,100,000 for a transportation pilot program to assist households, especially elders and people with disabilities, with transportation to access basic human needs
 - \$500,000 for food access programs
 - \$2,000,000 for housing authority language access plans
- **Home & Healthy for Good**
 - FY2024 Request: \$8.39 million
 - Governor proposed \$4.2 million - a \$2 million+ cut from FY2023
 - Will be strongly advocating for no cut and expansion of the program
- **HomeBASE**
 - FY2024 Request: \$60 million
 - Governor proposed \$42 million - a decrease from \$59.4 million in FY23 budget
 - Governor also proposed \$10 million aside for circumstances where an award of more than \$20,000 over two years is essential to resolve a housing crisis
 - Mass. Coalition for the Homeless also working on legislation to strengthen and improve the programs, including allowing automatic renewals and increasing the maximum benefit level. Some of these changes could be included in budget amendments.
- **Foreclosure & Housing Counseling**
 - Requesting level funding of \$3.05 million and to keep language to guarantee at least \$1.5 million for ch. 206 grants to support counseling agencies
 - The Governor proposed \$1.5 million for the program and removed language guaranteeing at least that much for ch. 206 counseling grants

- Will be advocating for funding amounts and set aside for ch. 206 grants to remain
- **Tenancy Preservation Program**
 - FY2024 Request: \$2 million
 - The Governor included this request in her budget
- **MassAccess Registry**
 - FY2024 Request: \$150,000
 - This amount was included in the Governor's budget
- **Unaccompanied Homeless Youth**
 - FY2024 Request: \$12 million
 - The Governor included \$10.5 million in her budget proposal
 - Will advocate for the increased funding
- **New Lease for Homeless Families**
 - FY2024 Request: \$250,000
 - Governor included this amount in her budget
- **Access to Counsel (NEW)**
 - New request for \$7 million to support an access to counsel program to provide legal representative and assistance to residents with low incomes facing eviction
 - Funding would be through Mass. Legal Assistance Corporation and would support the program working to be established by [Access to Counsel Legislation](#)
 - Governor did not include funding for this new program in her budget
- **Additional Budget Requests**
 - **Fair Housing Trust Fund:**
 - CHAPA also included \$1.5 million in funding for a new Fair Housing Trust Fund in its budget priorities.
 - The fund would support initiatives across Massachusetts to address the factors that influence housing discrimination, segregated communities, and disparities in access to opportunity. The trust fund would help eliminate housing discrimination and affirmatively further fair housing by providing resources to organizations, housing authorities, or communities that are working to enforce our fair housing laws, provide education and outreach to residents, and foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity for all those protected by our anti-discrimination laws.
 - CHAPA will also add a homeownership related budget priority, like the [STASH](#) program at MAHA