

The House Ways & Means FY 2016 Budget Proposal: Preliminary Analysis of Selected Cash and Nutrition Assistance, Child Care, Child Welfare, Health Care, Homelessness Services and Housing Items

April 16, 2015

On April 15, 2015, the House Committee on Ways and Means released its budget proposal for fiscal year 2016 (FY 16). The bill number is House 3400. MLRI offers this preliminary analysis of selected budget topics impacting low-income residents of the Commonwealth.

Cash Assistance, SNAP and Related Items Administered by DTA	(pages 1-4)
Child Care	(pages 4-5)
Child Welfare: Department of Children and Families, Office of the Child Advocate and Other Children's Services Issues	(pages 5-8)
Selected Health Issues in MassHealth, the Connector and the Health Safety Net	(pages 8-9)
Homeless Services	(pages 9-11)
Housing	(pages 11-13)
Legal Services	(page 14)

Cash Assistance, SNAP, Related Items Administered by DTA, and Nutrition Assistance

- 1. Cash assistance (including TAFDC, EAEDC, SSI state supplement, nutrition assistance)**
 - TAFDC (Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children, item 4403-2000) rent allowance and clothing allowance eliminated.** House Ways and Means **does not include the \$40 per month rent allowance**, which has been paid since 1987 to families who pay private, unsubsidized rent. The rent allowance is far too small to

pay for private housing but it does help some families pay to double up with another family and avoid being on the street or in shelter. House Ways and Means **also does not include the \$150 TAFDC children's clothing allowance.** The annual clothing allowance, paid in September for children receiving TAFDC, was established in 1981 and was increased to \$150 in 1986. It is possible that House Ways and Means did not intend to eliminate these two small but critical benefits since the appropriation may be enough to cover them, given the rapidly declining caseload. House Ways and Means also omitted the rent allowance last year; it was restored in the final FY 15 House budget

- **TAFDC would be funded at only \$222.2 million, \$28 million less than the FY 15 appropriation after the Governor's 9C cuts and about \$7 million less than House 1.** The proposed amount would be enough to cover benefits at current low levels for about 37,100 families on average during the year, which would be a 21% drop from FY 14. The caseload has been plummeting because of new DTA procedures that make it much harder for recipients to maintain their benefits. There are now more families in Massachusetts in deep poverty (income below 50 percent of the federal poverty level) than there are families receiving TAFDC. We are concerned that many more families will lose benefits when the Administration implements the welfare bill that was enacted last summer. Like the Governor, House Ways and Means does not direct any of the "savings" from the projected decline in the caseload to a long overdue increase in the cash benefit, which has lost more than half its value since 1988.
- **The line item includes language requiring DTA to give 60 days' advance notice to the Legislature before cutting benefits or making changes in eligibility.** As is in past years, the Governor's proposal did not include this provision. The advance notice language prevented the Governor from eliminating the clothing allowance in September 2010. In FY 10, the advance notice provision was critical to giving the Legislature time to work with the Governor to come up with a solution so that children in 9,100 families headed by a severely disabled parent would not lose their TAFDC benefits.
- **The Employment Services Program (ESP, item 4401-1000) would be slashed to \$5 million, less than half of FY 15 funding (after 9C cuts) of \$11.8 million.** This is less than one-seventh of the \$36 million appropriated in FY 02. Like the Governor, House Ways and Means does not propose any earmarks for this account, giving the Governor a blank (though very small) check to fund programs as he chooses. Currently, the line item funds the Young Parents Program; some short-term education and training for TAFDC parents; the DTA Works Program (paid internships at state agencies); up to \$80 a month in transportation reimbursement for recipients who are working or in education, training or job search; learning disability assessments; job search services for parents with limited English proficiency; and the cost of HiSET (formerly GED) testing for some recipients.
- **House Ways and Means also does not include funding for "Pathways to Self-Sufficiency" (item 4400-1979),** the new programs and services that were supposed to

be created by the welfare bill last summer. The Governor proposed \$3.3 million. The appropriations bill that accompanied the welfare bill last summer provided \$11 million for the Pathways program. All of that money was eliminated in two rounds of 9C reductions. We have many concerns about “Pathways,” but it is shocking that the proposed appropriation for ESP is so small and that “Pathways” funding is eliminated entirely, given legislators’ statements about the importance of education, training, and support services for TAFDC recipients. In federal FY 12, Massachusetts ranked 51st of all states (including the District of Columbia) in the percentage of federal and state welfare funds that the state spent on education, training and work supports for welfare families.

- **EAEDC (Emergency Aid to Elders, Disabled and Children, item 4408-1000) would be funded at \$81 million**, less than the FY 15 appropriation after 9C cuts but slightly more than the Governor’s proposal. The EAEDC caseload is also going down, but not as dramatically as the TAFDC caseload. An increase in EAEDC benefits is long overdue: grants were last raised in the 1980s. EAEDC benefits paid while a recipient is applying for SSI are reimbursed to the state once SSI is approved, so the state would recover the cost of any grant increase for some EAEDC recipients. Like the TAFDC line item, House Ways and Means includes language requiring advance notice to the legislature before the Administration cuts benefits or makes changes in eligibility.
 - **The state supplement for SSI (Supplemental Security Income, item 4405-2000) would be funded at \$228.7 million**, about \$1 million more than the FY 15 appropriation for this account after 9C cuts and the same as the Governor’s proposal.
 - **The Supplemental Nutrition Program (item 4403-2007), which provides a small state food SNAP supplement to thousands of low income working families who receive federal SNAP benefits (formerly called Food Stamps), would be funded at \$1.2 million**, the same as FY 15.
2. **Teen Living Programs (item 4403-2119) would be funded at \$9.9 million**, the same as the final FY 15 appropriation *before* 9C cuts. The appropriation was cut by \$680,000 in FY 15 because of delays in adding new beds. One bright spot in last summer’s welfare bill is a provision allowing pregnant teens to access these programs during any stage of pregnancy, instead of having to wait until their last trimester as they did previously.
3. **DTA administration**
- **The DTA worker account (item 4400-1100) would be funded at \$70.8 million**, \$5.6 million more than FY 15 after 9C cuts. In October 2014 DTA instituted a new system for SNAP-only cases under which households no longer have an assigned worker. Instead, households are supposed to call a DTA “Assistance Line” for help. After a rocky start, wait times and dropped calls have been reduced but the quality of assistance varies from excellent to useless. Meanwhile, DTA has had an enormous backlog of unprocessed documents resulting in terminations and denials even when

the household has submitted all requested verifications. These terminations and denials cause great hardship to households and also exacerbate the pressure on the Assistance Line because desperate households who have lost benefit have no option other than to try to reach the Assistance Line for help – which they often do not get.

- **DTA central administration (item 4400-1000) would be increased to \$65.1 million**, \$4.1 million more than FY 15. Increases in recent years have been targeted to DTA’s data matching and “program integrity” efforts, some of which, such as a system that terminates benefits based on flawed wage matches, is likely a major factor in the decline in the caseload. Unlike the Governor, House Ways and Means does not include language in the current line item that gives the Commissioner the authority to transfer funds between the TAFDC, EAEDC and SSI Supplement accounts “for identified deficiencies.” The Governor’s language would not prevent transfers even if they would create deficiencies.
- **Funding for the SNAP processing and outreach line item (4400-1001)**, would be increased slightly from \$2.9 million for FY 15 to \$3.1 million. Part of this account pays for a grant to Project Bread and other organizations that do SNAP outreach. These expenditures are matched dollar-for-dollar by the federal government.
- **DTA domestic violence workers (item 4400-1025) would receive a small increase from \$920,000 to \$1 million.**

Child Care

1. **House Ways and Means proposes an \$11.6 million increase in funding for the main child care subsidy accounts (TAFDC-related child care, income-eligible child care, and supportive child care).** This is \$5 million more than the Governor, all of which is in special account to reduce the income-eligible wait list.
 - **Child care for current and recent recipients of TAFDC (item 3000-4050) would be funded at \$121.4 million**, the same as House 1. This is a cut of \$10 million compared with the FY 15 appropriation after 9C cuts. The drop may be due to anticipated declines in the TAFDC caseload. If so, the Administration and House Ways and Means do not expect that parents who will be leaving TAFDC will be employed and need child care. The cut also suggests that despite the rhetoric that accompanied the recent welfare bill, the Administration does not expect an increase in the numbers of parents receiving TAFDC who will be working or participating in education or training. The House Ways and Means proposed line item does include a longstanding provision, omitted by the Governor, that TAFDC recipients – whose incomes are far below the poverty level – will not be charged fees.
 - **Income Eligible Child Care (item 3000-4060) would be funded at \$258 million, including the \$5 million proposed for Wait List Reduction (item 3000-4040).** amount is slightly more than FY 15 funding for income-eligible child care and wait

list reduction, and \$5 million more than the Governor's proposal. More than 25,000 children are on the wait list for income eligible child care.

- **Supportive Child Care (item 3000-3050) for children referred by the Department of Children and Families would be funded at \$100.2 million** compared with the FY 15 appropriation of \$79.7 million. The Governor also proposed \$100.2 million. According to the Governor's budget, Early Education and Care is expected to spend nearly \$90 million in FY 15. House Ways and Means includes current budget language – omitted by the Governor – that all children eligible for child care through this account shall receive it. However, despite this language, many children who need and are eligible for supportive child care do not receive it.
- **Head Start (item 3000-5000) would be level-funded at \$8.1 million.**
- **Funding to improve the quality of pre-kindergarten programs and expand access (item 3000-5075), funded at \$7.4 million in FY 15 after 9C cuts, would be kept at \$7.4 million.**
- **A Rate Reserve (item 1599-0042) would provide funding to increase reimbursement rates for center-based subsidized child care.** This could be used for any center-based costs including but not limited to salaries.

Child Welfare: Department of Children and Families, Office of the Child Advocate and Other Children's Services Issues

1. **House Ways and Means would fund DCF at \$898.5 million. This is \$27.2 million more than FY 15 projected spending, and roughly the same as (\$2 million less than) the Governor's proposal.**
 - **This increased allocation consists primarily of almost \$39 million to cover the cost of placing 1,000 additional children in foster care over the past year.**
 - The enormous increase in foster care placements primarily resulted from increased vigilance in the wake of publicity surrounding the 2014 death of Jeremiah Oliver, a child in DCF's caseload. It also resulted from increased reports of child abuse and neglect related to the substance abuse epidemic that has affected MA and the rest of the nation.
 - Of the total increased allocation for foster care costs, most of which the Governor also proposed, \$31.2 million is allocated to group care (4800-0041), for a total of \$253.3 in the group care account. In addition, \$7.6 million is allocated to foster care (4800-0038), for a total of \$277.5 in the foster care account.
2. **House Ways and Means does not propose a way to get out ahead of the current concerning trend of placing more and more children into foster care.** It proposes

no increase for Family Stabilization and Support services (item 4800-0040). These are the services that keep children safely at home by addressing the issues that brought them into the child welfare system in the first place. **Family Stabilization and Support services would be level funded at \$44.6 million.**

- **Despite the fact that 88% of the children in DCF's caseload need family stabilization and support services to remain safely at home or reunify safely with their families, House Ways and Means would allocate only 8% of DCF's services budget (4800-0038, 0040 and 0041) to these services.**
 - **The vast majority, more than 76%, of the families in DCF's caseload became involved with DCF because of neglect, not abuse.** Studies have established that risk to children caused by neglect, which is highly correlated with poverty, can be effectively addressed by family stabilization and support services, and that children whose families receive those services, not only avoid the trauma of separation from their families but also have better long term outcomes than children in foster care.
 - **In addition, HWM did not include the Governor's line item for the expansion of the network of Family Resource Centers (item 4000-0051).** HWM included \$7.4 million for Family Resource Centers rather than the \$9.9 million the Governor proposed. Family Resource Centers are an important means of addressing family problems before they become crises leading to child abuse and neglect and requiring DCF involvement.
3. **The Social Worker account (4800-1100) would be funded at \$201.5 million, just slightly less than what the Governor proposed.**
- According to SEIU local 509, the DCF social workers' union, the House Ways and Means allocation falls far short of what's needed to achieve the 15:1 caseload ratios that DCF negotiated with its workers. According to DCF, as of March 7, 2015, it has 342 social additional workers. However, according to the union, approximately 450 more workers beyond that are needed to bring caseloads to the 15:1 ratio in the union contract, which is also the national standard for caseloads recommended by the Child Welfare League of America. The union estimates the additional workers will cost slightly under \$30 million.
 - In order to keep children safe, whether at home or in foster care, social workers need the time to adequately monitor families, intensively manage those that present risk factors, and make sound decisions about whether a child can remain safely at home or needs to be removed. They also need access to the family stabilization and support services described in item 2 above.
4. **DCF's administrative account (item 4800-0015) would be increased by \$4.6 million over FY projected spending, to \$80.7 million.** This is what the Governor proposed.
- **HWM would preserve important reporting requirements, which the Governor proposed to eliminate, for its high stakes administrative hearing system (known**

as the “fair hearing system”). These require that DCF report to the legislature on whether it is holding hearings on time and making adequate progress in clearing its still very large backlog. DCF’s fair hearing system has been plagued by enormous backlogs and other problems as a result of which families are routinely denied their due process rights to challenge DCF’s decisions regarding their children. DCF has not yet even met deadlines that have already passed for these reports that the legislature required in the current budget.

- **House Ways and Means would eliminate the important requirement that DCF maintain a record of its fair hearings available to the public.** Although DCF’s own regulations require that it make some fair hearing records publicly available, it does not require a public record of the decisions in which the hearing officer rules for the family and the Commissioner reverses the decision of the hearing officer. **This information needs to be publicly available to ensure that the Fair Hearing system remains independent from undue influence by the Department. Attempts to scale back public access to this critical data will undermine the ongoing effectiveness of the legislature’s multi-year effort to achieve accountability in this hearing system that has high stakes for DCF-involved children and families.**
 - **House Ways and Means would maintain important longstanding reporting requirements which the Legislature requires to fulfill its oversight responsibilities.** The Governor had proposed to eliminate these. Under these requirements, DCF must report on each area office’s spending on services to keep children safely at home, on domestic violence shelters, on the number of kinship subsidies each office is provided, and on requests for voluntary services that each area office received and where they referred people they couldn’t help. This information is critical in assessing DCF’s effectiveness in meeting its core functions.
5. **House Ways and Means would eliminate funding for the lead agency account (item 4800-0030 currently funded at \$6 million.** Lead agencies are regional nonprofits that contract for services but do not provide services themselves.
 6. **Services to victims of domestic violence (item 4800-1400) would be funded at \$24.4 million which is \$477,000 more than the Governor proposed.** This account provides beds for domestic violence shelter, visitation services, and supports to victims of domestic violence, and pays for DCF domestic violence staff. These critical preventive services are not restricted to DCF involved families, but are available to all individuals who are served by these provider programs. Currently, the domestic violence shelter system is full and must turn away many domestic violence survivors who then turn to the Emergency Assistance system for shelter for themselves and their children.
 7. **Funding for the Office of the Child Advocate (item 0411-1005) would be \$450,000.** That office was funded at \$700,000 in FY 15, with \$200,000 allocated for an independent management review of DCF. **Thus the HWM allocation represents a decrease of \$50,000 in funding the core duties of this critically important office which has been seriously under-funded since its inception.** The child advocate is

mandated, among other duties, to “examine, on a system-wide basis, the care and services that executive agencies provide children” and “advise the public and those at the highest levels of state government about how the commonwealth may improve its services to and for children and their families.” **Increased funding is particularly critical given the need for systemic review and interagency coordination in addressing the child welfare crisis that the Commonwealth currently faces.**

Selected Health Issues in MassHealth

1. **House Ways and Means funds the MassHealth program along the same lines as the Governor’s proposal in House 1.** The Mass Health accounts in the HWM budget largely mirror those in House 1. In the first half of FY 16 MassHealth will continue the process of having current MassHealth beneficiaries reapply for benefits in the new computer system. HWM, like the Governor, attributes over \$400 million in savings compared to a FY 16 maintenance budget to reducing the MassHealth caseload through this reapplication process. Average MassHealth enrollment of 1.9 million in FY 15 is projected to drop to average enrollment of 1.7 million in FY 16. The new computer system, the same one used by the Connector, while light years better than its predecessor, is still flawed. The Administration had promised a transparent redetermination process but has so far not disclosed how many of the 500,000 people scheduled to reapply in March have been successfully redetermined. For a detailed analysis of the health provisions in House 1, see the MMPI Budget Brief dated April 2015.
2. **No cuts in MassHealth services.**
 - The scope of adult dental services in MassHealth were severely restricted in 2010, but have slowly been making a comeback. Fillings were restored last year, and the FY 15 budget restored dentures effective in May 2014. HWM, like the Governor, provides \$16 million for full year funding for coverage of dentures for adults in MassHealth and seems to promise further restorations. A section of the general laws enacted along with the state health reform law in 2006 requires coverage of all adult optional services covered in 2002. G.L. c. 118 E. s. 53. Any budget cut to optional services covered in 2002, like chiropractor services and dental services, requires language overriding this section of the general laws. There is no such language in the House Ways & Means budget.
 - Section 45 of the Governor’s budget had proposed \$600,000 in savings by cutting chiropractor services for adults on MassHealth. There is no comparable section authorizing this cut in the HWM budget.
3. **\$137 million for children with Autism.**
 - HWM, like the Governor, includes \$137 million in the 4000-0700 account to provide applied behavioral health analysis (ABA) services to an estimated 10,000 children

under 21 with Autism. Currently, only about 200 children (0-8) are covered through a MassHealth Autism waiver program.

- Coverage for all MassHealth eligible children who need it was mandated by state legislation enacted in 2014. St. 2014, c. 226, sec.25. ABA has been a mandated benefit for children with private insurance since 2010.
- Unfortunately, federal approval of a Medicaid state plan amendment submitted in December 2014 has been delayed by the Governor's "pause" on regulatory changes. The "pause" is holding up new licensing regulations for ABA providers (in the works for 3 years & ready to go once approved by the Administration) that must be in place before the amendment can be approved.

Homeless Services

1. Emergency Assistance (item 7004-0101) for homeless families with children would be funded at \$154.87 million (as the Governor proposed), which is at least \$29.5 million less than projected FY 15 spending, but thankfully, House Ways and Means rejects the Governor's proposed new eligibility restrictions.

- The Emergency Assistance (EA) program provides emergency shelter to certain families who are homeless and whom the Department of Children and Families verifies have no other safe place to stay. In FY 13, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) implemented restrictions on access to shelter so that many families with children must first become so desperate that they have slept in a place not meant for human habitation before they are eligible for shelter.
- HWM would continue these restrictions, in spite of strong demand by medical providers, educators and others, to provide shelter to those "within 24 hours of staying in a place not meant for human habitation," so that children do not have to sleep in cars, emergency rooms, or other inappropriate places before receiving shelter, as many now do. Fortunately, HWM did not include the Governor's proposed *additional* eligibility restrictions which would have driven even more homeless families into places not meant for human habitation.
- The proposed funding level is likely inadequate to provide emergency shelter for the entire fiscal year. Fortunately, there is a strong tradition of the Legislature providing supplemental funding to ensure shelter access to those who are eligible under the strict eligibility rules.
- **House Ways and Means retains important line item protections, including protection against unreasonable verification demands, 60 days' advance notice before any eligibility changes can be implemented, quarterly reports to the Legislature.** For many years, the line item has required DHCD to provide shelter for up to 30 days to homeless families who appear eligible and have nowhere else to go, but need more time to get verifications for a final eligibility determination. House Ways and Means retains this language as well as important language ensuring that

families are not required to submit unreasonable verifications, are not barred from shelter for 12 months if they were placed only presumptively, and can receive aid pending an appeal if they are found ineligible during the presumptive period. HWM also retains the very important advance notice requirement before any eligibility restrictions or benefits reductions could be adopted. This language has been critical in prior years to giving the Legislature time to ensure that access to emergency shelter for children and their families is not unduly restricted. HWM, unlike the Governor, also retains quarterly reporting requirements to the Legislature about what is happening to families, including those denied shelter.

2. **HomeBASE (item 7004-0108) would be funded at approximately \$31.25 million, an increase of approximately \$5.3 over projected FY 15 spending.**
 - This program was created in FY 12 to provide short term rental assistance instead of shelter to homeless families. **HWM, like the Governor, would increase the maximum level of assistance to \$8,000 per year per family**, up from \$6,000 in FY 15, although many families in FY 15 received \$8,000 through a combination of HomeBASE and Housing Stabilization Trust Funds. The increase is in recognition that a low-income family cannot retain housing for a year without additional support. Even \$8,000 is too little for many families to avoid falling back into homelessness, HWM includes language saying a family cannot receive a combined total of more than \$8,000 from HomeBASE and RAFT.
 - House Ways and Means retains language that bars a family who is terminated from HomeBASE from accessing either EA or more HomeBASE for a full 2 years. This language was created when HomeBASE paid for three years of actual rental assistance and is disproportionate to the benefits now available. Efforts will be made to reduce the maximum bar from 2 years to 1 year so that vulnerable families experiencing homelessness will not be left without assistance for too long.
 - As with EA, House Ways and Means retains the Administration's obligation to provide the Legislature with 60 days' advance notice before new eligibility restrictions or benefits reductions are imposed and its obligation to provide timely reports to the Legislature.
3. **House Ways and Means does *not* include the Governor's proposed new End Family Homelessness Reserve Fund (1599-0017), which the Governor would have funded at \$20 million.**
4. **Shelters and services for homeless individuals (item 7004-0102) would be funded at just over \$43.2 million**, a slight increase over the FY 15 appropriation. The **Home and Healthy for Good program (item 7004-0104)**, which provides housing for chronically homeless individuals, **would be level funded at \$1.8 million.**
5. **The DHCD homelessness administrative account (item 7004-0100) would be funded at just over \$6.2 million**, a slight increase as compared to FY 15 spending.

6. **The Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program (item 7004-9316), a homelessness prevention program for families with children, would be funded at \$12 million, a \$1 million increase over the FY 15 appropriation.**
 - As in FY 15, RAFT would provide up to a maximum of \$4,000 in assistance, but no family could receive from HomeBASE and RAFT more than a total of \$8,000.
 - **Funds can be used to help families at risk of becoming homeless or who are already homeless and need help to move into housing.** As in FY 15, 50% of the funds would targeted to families with incomes not greater than 30% of Area Median Income who are homeless and moving into unsubsidized housing, although DHCD would have discretion to use less of the funds for these families. The remaining funds are for households with incomes between 30% and 50% of Area Median Income who are homeless and moving into private *or* subsidized housing or who are at risk of homelessness because of a change in economic circumstances. The Governor proposed to target 90% of the funds to the lowest income families.
 - House Ways and Means (unlike the Governor) retains RAFT reporting requirements to the Legislature that were included in the FY 15 budget.

Housing

1. **Public Housing Operating Subsidies (item 7004-9005),** which provides housing authorities with operating funds to maintain the state's public housing units, would be **level funded at \$64 million.** Advocacy organizations requested \$69 million. An increase is needed. Tenants report that maintenance staff are stretched thin and unable to take care of basic repairs which are causing conditions to worsen. On the heels of public housing reform last year and at a time when the state is facing disturbing increases in homelessness among families, an increase to protect public housing is needed now more than ever.
 - As with last year's final budget, the **HWM budget instructs DHCD to make every attempt to rehabilitate family public housing requiring \$20,000 or less in repairs.** House 1 instructed DHCD to rehabilitate family public housing units requiring only \$10,000 or less in repairs.
 - As with last year's final budget, the HWM budget requires housing authorities operating elderly public housing to offer first preference for elderly public housing to elders age 60 years or older as of June 30, 2015 who are receiving MRVP vouchers. This language was not included in House 1.
2. **Public Housing Reform (item 7004-9007)** is a new line for some costs associated with the implementation of the new public housing reform law passed in 2014 (Chapter 235 of the acts of 2014). HWM budget proposes \$800,000, the same amount proposed by House 1. While there are no details about how these funds would be targeted, there are a number of new initiatives and requirements in the law that need funding including

implementation of a centralized waiting list for public housing, resident surveys, technical assistance for tenants, training for housing authority commissioners, and implementation of the new performance monitoring system.

3. **The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) (item 7004-9024)**, which provides long-term rental subsidies to low-income tenants in the private housing market, would be **increased from \$65 million** (before a 9C cut) **to \$90.9 million**, which HWM calls a “record” amount. This significant increase will fund at least 700 new vouchers while maintaining current participants.
 - **But the news gets better.** HWM allows up to \$8 million that was unexpended in FY15 to be made available for the MRVP program in FY16 and not revert to the general fund. **We believe this means that the HWM amount is actually \$98.9 million, an increase of \$33.9 million from FY 15!** This is very close to the \$100 million sought by advocates in the Housing Solutions campaign.
 - HWM deletes a provision that has been included for many years that vouchers shall vary in dollar amounts based on considerations such as family size, income and geographic location. We are not sure why that was deleted and what if any effect the deletion would have on the program.
 - The HWM budget, like the Governor’s budget, does not include a provision that was in the FY 15 budget that most new MRVP mobile vouchers should go to households on current housing wait lists. It also deletes language that bars consideration for MRVP of an applicant’s participation in the EA shelter program. These changes should enable more families to leave shelter for permanent housing.
4. **The Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP) (item 7004-9030)** would be **level funded at \$3.55 million**. This program provides mobile vouchers for people with disabilities under the age of 60 to rent apartments in the private market. There are currently 400 vouchers. Advocates are requesting that AHVP be increased to \$7.1 million which would provide rental assistance to approximately 800 households.
5. **The Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) (item 7004-3045)**, a homeless prevention program which helps preserve tenancies of persons with disabilities, would be **level funded at \$500,000**.
 - TPP is run by six regional provider agencies and is based in housing courts across the state. When very vulnerable individuals and families face possible homelessness as a result of behavior related to a disability (for example, mental illness, developmental disabilities, aging-related impairments), TPP clinicians address the reason for the eviction, identify needed services, develop a treatment plan to maintain the tenancy, and monitor the case as long as necessary.
 - In FY 13, TPP directly assisted 552 households. In FY 14, although there was no increase in funding, TPP directly assisted 601 families and achieved a 92%

- homelessness prevention rate. It also provided consultation to an additional 1,640 households ineligible or waitlisted for services in FY 14.
- **With an increase of \$500,000**, TPP services could be provided to an additional 200 households with disabilities and consultation services to an additional 600 households.
6. **Urban Agenda Housing (7004-9008)** is a new line item in both HWM and House 1 which provides \$1 million in planning grants to local housing authorities and municipalities in urban areas to develop new affordable rental or homeownership housing under criteria established by DHCD.
 7. **DHCD Administrative account (item 7004-0099) is increased from \$7.3 million to \$7.8 million. Given staffing and resource shortages at DHCD, even this small increase will help improve operations and work on various projects.**
 - HWM re-inserts the requirement in the last three budgets that DHCD promulgate regulations ensuring that those receiving temporary housing subsidies retain any housing admissions priority for homeless and at-risk households. The Governor's budget, House 1, had deleted this provision. HWM's inclusion of the provision means that households receiving rent stipends under the HomeBASE Household Assistance program and other time-limited rental assistance programs will not be denied priority for state-assisted housing. The HWM provision will decrease the risk that these families will become homeless again when their temporary assistance ends. This is what the Legislature was attempting to prevent in previous budgets. Also, HWM would renew language in the FY 15 line item requiring expenditure of at least \$250,000 for implementation and evaluation of establishing a homeless preference in private multi-family housing. This could be an important initiative to help lift families out of homelessness.
 8. **Department of Mental Health Rental Subsidy Program (item 7004-9033)**, which provides rental subsidies to eligible clients of the Department of Mental Health, would be funded at approximately **\$5 million**. This is the same amount proposed by the Governor in House 1 and is a slight decrease from last year. (This account was also subject to a 9C cut during FY 15.)
 9. **Housing Services and Counseling (item 7004-3036)**, which provides grants to nine regional housing consumer education centers for housing services and counseling would be funded at **\$2.6 million** which is almost \$1 million more than the Governor proposed and about \$500,000 more than in the FY15 budget.
 10. **Outside section 57** would require the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency to transfer \$4 million and the Comptroller to transfer \$5 million (from the General Fund) into the Housing Stabilization Trust fund for use in FY 16.

Legal Services

1. For the **Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (item 0321-1600)**, which supports grants for civil legal aid programs for low-income residents of Massachusetts, House Ways and Means is recommending funding in the amount of \$17 million, which is \$2 million more than the FY 15 GAA appropriation (which was reduced in February of this year by chapter 2 of the acts of 2015 to \$14.7 million). The Governor's proposal would have funded MLAC at the \$14.7 million amount for FY 16. The House Ways and Means recommendation represents a much-needed increase that is critical to help meet the increasing statewide demand for civil legal services. While this \$2 million increase is greatly appreciated, it falls far short of the \$10 million increase that MLAC had requested to meet the legal needs of low income people in the Commonwealth.

For more information, contact Margaret Monsell, mmonsell@mlri.org, who will direct your question to the appropriate MLRI Advocate.