

HOUSE No. 47

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts



MAURA T. HEALEY
GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE · , MA

KIMBERLY DRISCOLL
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

January 30, 2023

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives,

I submit for your consideration a bill entitled “An Act Making Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2023 to Provide for Supplementing Certain Existing Appropriations and for Certain Other Activities and Projects.”

The demand for emergency shelter by families experiencing homelessness in the Commonwealth has significantly increased, and the emergency temporary shelter system is at capacity. While the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has been working to place vulnerable people and expanding capacity to meet its revised caseload projections, Emergency Assistance (EA) funds have been depleted. As a right to shelter state, the Commonwealth is committed to providing safe temporary shelter to these families. With additional funding, DHCD will be able to continue the urgent task of expanding the capacity of the EA system by investing in the infrastructure, workforce, and supportive network of providers that help stabilize and rehouse these families to improve their circumstances.

As we invest in our EA shelter system, we must also partner with the local communities that have stepped up to welcome their neighbors and newcomers who need a hand. We will continue to increase shelter capacity equitably and sustainably, recognizing that these families and the communities in which they live are struggling to meet their needs. In particular, we must assist the schools and school districts that play a key role in helping kids whose families are experiencing homelessness.

We know that people affected by homelessness may require medical care and other services in addition to shelter to get back on their feet. School-aged children need to continue their education. People with complex language and legal barriers due to federal immigration and refugee policies may need support that addresses these distinct challenges. The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) has established a temporary central intake center located in the Bob Eisengrein Community Center in Devens where families receive timely case management services and various intake assessments before being transferred to an EA shelter site or another more permanent housing solution.

To address the caseload demand for family shelter, we urgently need to invest in and build the capacity of the EA system through all of these dimensions: increasing shelter units, growing our provider network, investing in our supportive service workforce, assisting local communities and schools who are welcoming families in need, providing interventions and supportive services that will connect people experiencing homelessness with the tools they need to stabilize and find permanent housing. Therefore, I am proposing that the Legislature appropriate \$85 million for immediate needs of the various agencies that each have a unique role in responding to this crisis.

As you know, recently enacted federal legislation will end the supplemental emergency allotment of aid to households who benefit from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This enhanced federal benefit had been available during the pandemic and will be ending March 1. In order to assist Massachusetts residents who rely upon SNAP to feed their families, I am proposing a temporary ramp-down of the enhanced federal benefit by repurposing enhanced federal Medicaid funding to cover three months of supplemental allotments to SNAP recipients at an amount equal to 40% of the previous federal emergency program. These three months will assist households benefitting from SNAP to pay for healthy food. I am proposing \$130 million to establish this temporary ramp-down of enhanced SNAP benefits for this purpose, and an additional \$2 million to reimburse victims of SNAP benefit theft.

In the fiscal year 2023 General Appropriation Act, the Legislature enacted a pilot program to allow all K-12 students in Massachusetts to qualify for free school meals. The funding for that program has now been depleted, which would result in the program's early end in March. In order to continue the universal school meals pilot program statewide for the remainder of the 2022-2023 school year, I am proposing an additional \$65 million to meet projected need.

The total supplemental appropriations requested, including EA shelter and related proposals, enhanced SNAP ramp-down, and completion of the universal school meals pilot program is \$282 million.

Funding from this proposal will:

- Cover the cost of the projected increase in EA program caseload through the end of Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23);
- Facilitate the recruitment and retention of necessary service providers to scale the EA shelter provider network and its workforce;
- Expand the EA system by bringing new shelter units online;
- Assist local school districts with emergency aid for students whose families are experiencing homelessness;
- Establish and operate a temporary centralized intake center so families during their first few days in shelter can receive timely and focused case management services;
- Provide health care, supportive services, and specialized immigration and refugee-focused case management to families who need them;
- Provide a three-month ramp down of enhanced SNAP benefits at an amount equal to 40% of the previous federal enhanced SNAP allotment; and
- Continue funding for the universal free student meals pilot program for the remainder of the 2022-23 school year.

The bill also includes an outside section to allow for the efficient use of available resources by authorizing the transfer of funds between the EA and the HomeBASE line items in the FY23 budget, which will allow appropriated shelter funding to be utilized where it is most needed across the system.

Sufficient revenues are available to finance the appropriations and other proposed measures. I urge you to enact this legislation promptly to ensure that we continue to have capacity to shelter all eligible families.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maura T. Healey,
Governor

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
(2023-2024)

An Act making appropriations for the fiscal year 2023 to provide for supplementing certain existing appropriations and for certain other activities and projects.

Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purposes, which are to make supplemental appropriations for fiscal year 2023 and to make certain changes in law, each of which is immediately necessary to carry out those appropriations or to accomplish other important public purposes, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. To provide for supplementing certain items in the general appropriation act
2 and other appropriation acts for fiscal year 2023, the sums set forth in section 2 are hereby
3 appropriated from the General Fund unless specifically designated otherwise in this act or in
4 those appropriation acts, for the several purposes and subject to the conditions specified in this
5 act or in those appropriation acts, and subject to the laws regulating the disbursement of public
6 funds for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023. These sums shall be in addition to any amounts
7 previously appropriated and made available for the purposes of those items. These sums shall be
8 made available through the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023.

9 SECTION 2.

10 EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

11 Department of Housing and Community Development
12 7004-0101 Emergency Assistance Family Shelters and Services.....\$44,938,224

13 EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

14 Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
15 7053-1925 School Breakfast Program.....\$65,000,000

16 SECTION 2A. To provide for certain unanticipated obligations of the commonwealth, to
17 provide for an alteration of purpose for current appropriations, and to meet certain requirements
18 of law, the sums set forth in this section are hereby appropriated from the General Fund unless
19 specifically designated otherwise in this section, for the several purposes and subject to the
20 conditions specified in this section, and subject to the laws regulating the disbursement of public
21 funds for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023. Except as otherwise stated, these sums shall be
22 made available through the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024.

23 EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

24 Reserves

25 1599-0924 For a reserve to address the needs of homeless families and individuals;
26 provided, that funding may be expended to supplement school district costs associated with
27 additional student enrollments; provided further, that any such funds distributed to a city, town or
28 regional school district to supplement school district costs associated with additional student
29 enrollments shall be deposited with the treasurer of such city, town, or regional school district
30 and held in a separate account and shall be expended by the school committee of such city, town
31 or regional school district without further appropriation, notwithstanding any general or special

32 law to the contrary; provided further, that funds in this item shall be distributed in a manner that
33 promotes geographic equity and fairly distributes school burdens and associated funding to
34 communities in which shelter capacity is increased; and provided further, that the secretary of
35 administration and finance may transfer funds from this item to state agencies as defined in
36 section 1 of chapter 29 of the General Laws.....\$40,061,776

37 1599-3068 For emergency allotments to households participating in the supplemental
38 nutrition assistance program under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to address food needs and
39 increased food costs; provided, that the emergency allotments shall be up to 40 per cent of the
40 amount needed to bring the monthly benefit up to the applicable maximum monthly allotment for
41 the household size or up to 40 per cent of \$95, whichever is greater.....\$130,000,000

42 EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

43 Department of Transitional Assistance

44 4400-1030 For reimbursement to clients who have had their federal Supplemental
45 Nutrition Assistance Program payments stolen through Electronic Benefit Transfer card
46 skimming, card cloning, or other similar fraudulent electronically-based method, during the
47 period of April 1, 2022 through September 30, 2022; provided, that claims for such
48 reimbursement must be verified by the department and must be reported to the department by
49 June 30, 2023; provided further, that reimbursements shall not exceed the lesser of the amount of
50 benefits stolen from the household, or the amount equal to 2 months of the monthly allotment of
51 the household immediately prior to the date on which the benefits were stolen.....\$2,000,000

52 SECTION 3. Item 7004-0108 of section 2 of chapter 126 of the acts of 2022 is hereby
53 amended by striking out the word “annually” and inserting in place thereof the following words:-

54 annually; and provided further, that the secretary of housing and economic development may
55 transfer funds between items 7004-0108 and 7004-0101; and provided further, that the secretary
56 of housing and economic development shall notify the house and senate committees on ways and
57 means not less than 14 days in advance of any such transfer.