



April 8, 2024

RE: *House 4466 and Senate 2711*

Chairman Aaron Michlewitz
House Committee on Ways & Means
State House, Room 332
Boston, MA 02133

Chairman Michael Rodrigues
Senate Committee on Ways & Means
State House, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairman Michlewitz and Chairman Rodrigues:

On behalf of the Providers' Council and our undersigned members who provide Emergency Assistance Family Shelter programs in Massachusetts, thank you for your historic support of this critical safety net and the additional funding you've included in these FY '24 supplemental budget bills.

We're appreciative to the Legislature for continuing to propose solutions that will fund a family shelter system that remains at its 7,500-family capacity since November 2023. Thank you for the important debate on House 4466 and Senate 2711, and for including funding for the Emergency Assistance Family Shelter system.

As providers and supporters of the family shelter system, we would ask you to consider including the following four items as you meet this month to work out differences in the two bills:

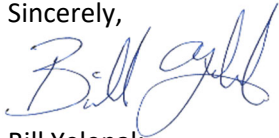
- ***We ask the Conference Committee to include language from Senate 2711 that would allow for one or more 90-day extensions to residents who meet certain criteria (Section 3, Subsection G).***
 - From our experience, the average stay in a shelter for a family is roughly 15 months, and we're concerned that time limits in the supplemental bills would force families from shelter and leave them no place to go. We appreciate that both the House and Senate included extensions and certain provisions, and we feel the Senate's language – whereby shelter residents could receive one or more 90-day extensions for meeting certain criteria – would help more residents avoid a loss of shelter and not become homeless again.
- ***We ask the Conference Committee to include funding language from House 4466 that would allocate an additional \$245 million to the Emergency Assistance Family Shelter system through the end of the current fiscal year (line item 1599-1213).***
 - While we also appreciate the Senate including additional funding for FY '25 in its proposal, we are currently unclear at how much funding will be necessary to support the system in FY '25 and if the amounts proposed in Senate 2711 would be sufficient. The House language would allow for additional funding over the Senate language for the remainder of FY '24, and we feel that would be helpful in providing critical shelter and services to those living in the Emergency Assistance Family Shelter system.
- ***We ask the Conference Committee to include language from House 4466 that would use not less than \$10 million to establish "an approved training program ... to provide skills and resources for individuals and families in the emergency housing assistance program or in overflow emergency shelter sites (line item 1599-1213).***
 - This job training program would help those in the emergency assistance family shelter system receive job training, skills and resources to help them find employment.
- ***We ask the Conference Committee to include language from Senate 2711 that allows for the executive office for administration and finance to submit biweekly reports (Section 18).***

- These reports would provide more information about the shelter system, those applying for shelter, the number of families on the waitlist and more.

As we continue to provide essential services to meet the growing need of Massachusetts residents and new arrivals to Massachusetts, we appreciate the continued support from the Legislature, who has been a longtime partner in this work. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Should you have questions about the Emergency Assistance Family Shelter system or this request, we would be happy to meet with you and/or your staff to discuss this issue in greater detail and have a conversation about additional solutions. Thank you again for your historic commitment to the human services sector and our state's family shelter system, and we look forward to connecting with you in the near future.

Sincerely,



Bill Yelenak
President/CEO
Providers' Council

And the undersigned Providers' Council members:

Angela Bovill, President and CEO, Ascentria Care Alliance
Leah Bradley, CEO, Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance
Charlie Clifford, CEO, Old Colony YMCA
Mark DeJoie, CEO, Centerboard
Mark Evans, CEO, Lynn Shelter Association
Danielle Ferrier, CEO, Heading Home
Karen Frederick, CEO, Community Teamwork
Susan Gentili, CEO, South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC)
Jim Goodwin, President/CEO, Center for Human Development
Melinda Matthews, President/CEO, Eliot Community Human Services
Sandra McCroom, President/CEO, Children's Services of Roxbury
Laura Meisenhelter, Executive Director, North Shore Community Action Programs
Bob Mills, CEO, Middlesex Human Service Agency, Inc.
Shiela Y. Moore, CEO, Hildebrand Family Self-Help Center
Daniel Mumbauer, President & CEO, High Point & SEMCOA
Jeanine Murphy, CEO, Emmaus Inc.
France A. Neff, President and CEO, Family Independence, Inc.
Sarah Porter, Executive Director, Victory Programs, Inc.
Laura Rosi, CEO, Housing Families
Larry Seamans, President & CEO, FamilyAid
David Shapiro, CEO, YMCA of Greater Boston
Felicia Smith, Executive Director, Sojourner House
Alexis Steel, President, St. Mary's Center for Women and Children
Sue Stubbs, President and CEO, ServiceNet, Inc.
Carolina Trujillo, Executive Director, Citizens Inn
Kelley Tuthill, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Boston
John Yazwinski, President & CEO, Father Bill's & MainSpring