

SENATE No. 16

Senate, February 10, 2025 -- Text of the Senate amendment (Senator Rodrigues) to the House Bill making appropriations for fiscal year 2025 to provide for supplementing certain existing appropriations and for certain other activities and projects (House, No. 58)

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)

1 SECTION 1. To provide for supplementing certain items in the general appropriation act
2 and other appropriation acts for fiscal year 2025, the sums set forth in section 2A are hereby
3 appropriated from the Transitional Escrow Fund established in section 16 of chapter 76 of the
4 acts of 2021, as amended by section 4 of chapter 98 of the acts of 2022, unless specifically
5 designated otherwise in this act or in those appropriation acts, for the several purposes and
6 subject to the conditions specified in this act or in those appropriation acts, and subject to the
7 laws regulating the disbursement of public funds for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025. These
8 sums shall be in addition to any amounts previously appropriated and made available for the
9 purposes of those items. These sums shall be made available through the fiscal year ending June
10 30, 2026.

11 SECTION 2A. To provide for certain unanticipated obligations of the commonwealth, to
12 provide for an alteration of purpose for current appropriations and to meet certain requirements
13 of law, the sums set forth in this section are hereby appropriated from the Transitional Escrow
14 Fund established in section 16 of chapter 76 of the acts of 2021, as amended by section 4 of
15 chapter 98 of the acts of 2022, unless specifically designated otherwise in this section, for the

16 several purposes and subject to the conditions specified in this section, and subject to the laws
17 regulating the disbursement of public funds for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025. Except as
18 otherwise stated, these sums shall be made available through the fiscal year ending June 30,
19 2026.

20 1599-2625 For purposes related to supportive services and safe shelter for unhoused
21 families in the commonwealth; provided, that the secretary of administration and finance may
22 transfer funds from this item to state agencies as defined in section 1 of chapter 29 of the General
23 Laws; provided further, that the secretary of administration and finance shall notify the house
24 and senate committees on ways and means not less than 14 days prior to any such transfer of
25 funds from this item; provided further, that temporary respite sites shall be available to eligible
26 families upon arrival in the commonwealth, subject to appropriation, rules, regulations and
27 availability, for a period of not more than 30 days, subject to any extensions upon written
28 certification by the secretary of housing and livable communities; provided further, that
29 temporary respite sites shall be available for a period of not more than 30 days to families who
30 appear eligible but are unable to provide sufficient documentation as required by clause (iv) of
31 subsection (b) of section 6, subject to appropriation, rules, regulations and availability; provided
32 further, that temporary respite sites shall only be available to families who verify their identity
33 and provide information sufficient to comply with paragraph (C 1/2) of section 30 of chapter
34 23B of the General Laws; provided further, that the length of stay at a temporary respite site shall
35 constitute a benefit received under the emergency housing assistance program for the purpose of
36 calculating length of stay limit under subparagraph (3) of paragraph (G) of said section 30 of said
37 chapter 23B; provided further, that placement in a temporary respite site shall not make a family
38 ineligible for the bridge shelter track after proving eligibility pursuant to section 6; provided

39 further, that the executive office of housing and livable communities may work with resettlement
40 agencies to coordinate the provision of services to families and pregnant women in temporary
41 respite centers and shall continue to facilitate the provision of services to said families and
42 pregnant women; provided further, that funds appropriated in this item may be expended for any
43 purpose under item 1599-0514 of section 2A of chapter 77 of the acts of 2023, item 1599-1213
44 of section 2A of chapter 88 of the acts of 2024 and items 7004-0101, 7004-0108 and 7004-9316
45 of section 2 of chapter 140 of the acts of 2024; provided further, that the secretary of
46 administration and finance may transfer funds from this item to the Workforce Competitiveness
47 Trust Fund, established in section 2WWW of chapter 29 of the General Laws, for work programs
48 targeted at supporting the populations served by this item; and provided further, that reporting
49 requirements under said item 1599-0514 of said section 2A of said chapter 77 and said item
50 1599-1213 of said section 2A of said chapter 88 shall apply to this item.....\$425,000,000

51 SECTION 3. Section 30 of chapter 23B of the General Laws, as most recently amended
52 by section 3 of chapter 88 of the acts of 2024, is hereby further amended by inserting after
53 paragraph (C) the following paragraph:-

54 (C 1/2)(1) The executive office shall require each individual adult applicant or
55 beneficiary to disclose on their initial or subsequent application for emergency housing
56 assistance benefits all prior criminal convictions, whether in the commonwealth or another
57 jurisdiction. The executive office shall not require prior convictions that have been sealed or
58 expunged to be disclosed. An adult applicant or beneficiary who fails to disclose prior criminal
59 convictions consistent with this paragraph shall not be eligible for benefits and any existing
60 benefits shall be terminated.

61 (2) The executive office shall obtain criminal offender record information from the
62 department of criminal justice information services for each individual adult applicant or
63 beneficiary prior to placement into the emergency housing assistance program. An adult
64 applicant or beneficiary who fails to consent to the executive office obtaining such criminal
65 offender record information consistent with this paragraph shall not be eligible for benefits and
66 any existing benefits shall be terminated. The executive office shall establish, through
67 regulations, protocols on information received from the department of criminal justice
68 information services.

69 (3) The executive office shall promulgate regulations placing limitations or exclusions on
70 individuals found to have convictions or pending charges for serious crimes, as defined by the
71 office by regulation.

72 SECTION 4. Paragraph (G) of said section 30 of said chapter 23B, inserted by section 3
73 of chapter 88 of the acts of 2024, is hereby amended by striking out subparagraphs (3) to (9),
74 inclusive, and inserting in place thereof the following 6 subparagraphs:-

75 (3) A family with children or a pregnant woman with no other children that receives
76 benefits through the emergency housing assistance program shall, subject to appropriation and
77 rules, regulations and availability, remain eligible for the program for not more than 6
78 consecutive months.

79 (4) A family with children or pregnant woman with no other children that receives
80 benefits through the emergency housing assistance program may receive extensions to the length
81 of stay limit under subparagraph (3) upon written certification of hardship by the secretary;
82 provided, however, that such hardship waivers shall be granted by the secretary for a family with

83 an individual who: (i) is qualified as a veteran under clause Forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4
84 who is not enrolled in services specifically tailored to veterans, including, but not limited to,
85 those administered by the executive office of veterans services; (ii) is at imminent risk of harm
86 due to domestic violence; (iii) is documented as having a disability; (iv) has imminent pending
87 placement in housing; (v) has a high-risk pregnancy or has recently given birth; or (vi) satisfies
88 any additional criteria the secretary of housing and livable communities deems necessary.

89 (5) The executive office shall limit the number of families with children and pregnant
90 women with no other children to be terminated from the emergency housing assistance program
91 in any week due to reaching the length of stay limit established under subparagraph (3). The
92 executive office shall provide notice not less than 90 days prior to the termination of benefits for
93 each family and pregnant woman.

94 (6) The executive office shall promulgate regulations or guidance for eligibility which
95 shall: (i) establish procedures for the termination of benefits pursuant to this paragraph, including
96 for a hardship waiver under subparagraph (4); and (ii) allow a family with children or a pregnant
97 woman with no other children to reapply for the emergency housing assistance program;
98 provided, however, that eligibility determinations when reapplying for the program shall be
99 consistent with the guidance issued by the secretary of housing and livable communities.

100 (7) The executive office shall provide printed handouts to families with children and
101 pregnant women receiving benefits through the emergency housing assistance program, which
102 shall include, but shall not be limited to, information about: (i) authorized training programs; (ii)
103 approved training programs; (iii) food resources, including food pantries; (iv) services offered by
104 resettlement agencies; (v) other housing programs; (vi) other nonprofit or available resources the

105 executive office deems necessary or helpful; and (vii) length of stay limits and extension process.
106 All written information shall be translated into multiple languages and shall be available on the
107 executive office's website.

108 (8) This paragraph shall apply during any period in which the secretary of housing and
109 livable communities has determined that the shelter system unable to meet all current and
110 projected demand for shelter from eligible families considering the facts and circumstances then
111 existing in the commonwealth.

112 SECTION 5. Said section 30 of said chapter 23B, as most recently amended by said
113 section 3 of said chapter 88, is hereby further amended by adding the following paragraph:-

114 (H) The executive office shall require each adult applicant or beneficiary that joins a
115 family receiving emergency housing assistance to provide notice to the executive office of any
116 addition to the family and the executive office shall require a complete review of all information
117 necessary to verify the individual's eligibility pursuant to this section and 760 CMR 67.00 or
118 successor regulations. An adult applicant or beneficiary who fails to report to the executive
119 office for complete verification of requirements pursuant to this section or 760 CMR 67.00 or
120 successor regulations shall not be eligible for benefits and any existing benefits shall be
121 terminated.

122 SECTION 6. (a) For the purposes of this section, the following words shall have the
123 following meanings unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

124 "Emergency housing assistance program", the program of emergency housing assistance
125 program under section 30 of chapter 23B of the General Laws and funded by item 7004-0101 of
126 section 2 of chapter 140 of the acts of 2024.

127 “Executive office”, the executive office of housing and livable communities.

128 (b) Notwithstanding item 7004-0101 of section 2 of chapter 140 of the acts of 2024, the
129 executive office shall:

130 (i) require families whose income exceeds 200 per cent of the federal poverty level for 4
131 consecutive months to be deemed ineligible for the emergency housing assistance program;

132 (ii) require that all emergency housing assistance program benefits be provided to
133 families consisting entirely of residents of the commonwealth who are citizens of the United
134 States or persons lawfully admitted for permanent residence or otherwise permanently residing in
135 the United States under the color of law, except in cases where a child in the family is a citizen
136 of the United States, a person lawfully admitted for permanent residence or a person permanently
137 residing in the United States under color of law;

138 (iii) to the extent practicable, make best efforts to place a family within 20 miles of the
139 household’s home community;

140 (iv) verify, for each applicant, their: (A) identity; (B) Massachusetts residency pursuant to
141 clause (v); (C) relationship status; (D) pregnancy status; and (E) other eligibility requirements
142 under said item 7004-0101 of said section 2 of said chapter 140 and pursuant to 760 CMR 67.00
143 or any successor regulations, through third-party verification or otherwise, prior to placement in
144 an emergency shelter; provided, however, that the executive office shall not be required to
145 provide shelter to families who are unable to provide required verifications in this section prior
146 to placement; provided further, that the executive office may offer a case-specific waiver for
147 exigent circumstances and at the discretion of the executive office; and provided further, that the
148 executive office shall establish, through regulations, a criteria for case-specific waivers, which

149 shall include, but not be limited to, waivers for: (1) an imminent threat of domestic violence; (2)
150 families with a family member who has a documented disability; (3) families with a family
151 member who has a high-risk pregnancy or who has recently given birth; and (4) families with a
152 qualified veteran under clause Forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4 of the General Laws who is
153 not enrolled in services specifically tailored to veterans, including, but not limited to, those
154 administered by the executive office of veterans services; and

155 (v) require each applicant for benefits under the emergency housing assistance program
156 to establish residency in the commonwealth; provided, however, that an applicant's family shall
157 be required to show an intent to remain in the commonwealth, which may be shown through
158 sources of verification accepted by the executive office; provided further, that the executive
159 office shall promulgate regulations on sources of acceptable verification which shall include, but
160 shall not be limited to, documentation showing a person is enrolled with MassHealth,
161 documentation showing a person receives public benefits in the commonwealth, a bill or other
162 insurance documentation with an address, an email, letter or statement from a licensed health
163 care worker on office letterhead or office email stating that the person resides in the
164 commonwealth or a photo identification issued by the commonwealth.

165 (c) An applicant who appears to be eligible for shelter based on statements provided by
166 the family and any other information in the possession of the executive office but who need
167 additional time to obtain any third-party verifications reasonably required by the executive office
168 shall be placed on a waitlist for emergency housing assistance; provided, however, that each
169 adult in the family of applicants shall provide proof of identity to be placed on said waitlist.

170 SECTION 7. Notwithstanding section 30 of chapter 23B of the General Laws, for the
171 period of December 31, 2025 to December 31, 2026, inclusive, the total capacity of the
172 emergency housing assistance program established pursuant to said section 30 of said chapter
173 23B shall not exceed 4,000 families.

174 SECTION 8. The executive office for administration and finance shall submit a biweekly
175 report to the clerks of the senate and house of representatives and the house and senate
176 committees on ways and means that shall include, but not be limited to: (i) reporting under item
177 1599-0514 of chapter 77 of the acts of 2023; (ii) reporting required under section 19 of chapter
178 88 of the acts of 2024; (iii) the total caseload of the emergency assistance shelter program,
179 delineated by rapid shelter track and bridge shelter track; (iv) the number of families who have
180 applied for emergency assistance shelter in the previous 14 days, delineated by rapid shelter
181 track and bridge shelter track; (v) the number of families who were unable to provide the
182 required verification during application as established under section 6 in the previous 14 days;
183 (vi) the number of families who were unable to provide the required verifications but were
184 granted a case-specific waiver by the secretary of housing and livable communities in the
185 previous 14 days; (vii) the number of families on the waitlist for services under the emergency
186 assistance shelter program, delineated by rapid shelter track and bridge shelter track; (viii) a
187 description of the services provided to such families, delineated by rapid shelter track and bridge
188 shelter track; (ix) the total number of families who have exited the emergency assistance shelter
189 program in the previous 14 days, delineated by rapid shelter track and bridge shelter track and
190 delineating length of stay in emergency shelter of each family; (x) a summary of resources,
191 programs and assistance, including, but not limited to, HomeBASE, used by families who exited
192 shelter in the previous 14 days, delineated by rapid shelter track and bridge shelter track; (xi) the

193 total number of families who exited emergency shelter in the previous 14 days due to the length
194 of stay limits, delineated by rapid shelter track and bridge shelter track, and including
195 information on resources or supports for those families exiting; (xii) the total number of families
196 on the waitlist who have been placed in emergency shelter in the previous 14 days, delineated by
197 rapid shelter track and bridge shelter track; (xiii) the total number of individuals in the
198 emergency assistance shelter program that are employed; (xiv) the average and median length of
199 stay for families currently in the emergency assistance shelter program, delineated by rapid
200 shelter track and bridge shelter track; (xv) the total number of families who have applied for a
201 hardship waiver established under section 4 and were granted a hardship waiver by the secretary
202 of housing and livable communities in the previous 14 days; (xvi) the total number of hotel and
203 motel rooms in use in the previous 14 days, delineated by municipality; (xvii) the total number of
204 hotel and motel rooms that have been phased out of emergency shelter use in the previous 14
205 days, delineated by municipality; and (xviii) the total estimated cost of the emergency assistance
206 shelter system for fiscal year 2026 based on projected changes to estimated caseload, capacity
207 and other policy changes under this act.

208 SECTION 9. The executive office for administration and finance, in consultation with the
209 executive office of housing and livable communities, shall submit a report not later than 60 days
210 following the effective date of this act to the clerks of the senate and house of representatives and
211 the senate and house committees on ways and means detailing a plan to phase out the use of
212 hotels and motels for emergency housing assistance not later than December 31, 2025. The
213 report shall include, but shall not be limited to: (i) the total number of hotel and motel rooms to
214 be phased out; (ii) the planned number of hotel and motel rooms to be phased out each month;
215 (iii) the planned date by which phasing out hotel and motel rooms is to be completed; (iv) the

216 methodology to identify and prioritize hotel and motel rooms to phase out; (v) the
217 communication protocols or plans to inform stakeholders of changes and support families exiting
218 hotels; (vi) the total estimated savings due to phasing out hotel and motel rooms; and (vii) the
219 monthly estimated savings due to phasing out hotel and motel rooms.

220 SECTION 10. Not later than July 31, 2025, the executive office of housing and livable
221 communities, in coordination with the executive office of health and human services, the
222 Massachusetts interagency council on housing and homelessness and family homelessness
223 service providers, shall submit a report to the clerks of the senate and house of representatives
224 and the senate and house committees on ways and means that shall include, but not be limited to:
225 (i) detailed information on the most effective and cost-effective state programs and investments
226 for the prevention of family homelessness; (ii) strategic and cost-effective changes to the
227 emergency housing assistance program that prevent homelessness and promote stable rehousing;
228 and (iii) the impact of various benefit levels for programs, including, but not limited to, the
229 residential assistance for families in transition program and the HomeBASE rental assistance
230 program, on the prevention of family homelessness and on ensuring stable housing for families
231 transitioning out of the emergency housing assistance program.