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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

March 3, 2026

Governor Maura Healey
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Michael D. Hurley
Clerk of the Senate
State House
Room 335
Boston, MA 02133

Sen. Robyn K. Kennedy
Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Children,
Families and Persons with Disabilities
State House
Room 312-D
Boston, MA 02133

Office of the Child Advocate
One Ashburton Place
11th Floor
Boston, MA 02108
Timothy Carroll
Clerk of the House
State House
Room 145
Boston, MA 02133

Rep. Jay D. Livingstone
House Chair, Joint Committee on Children,
Families and Persons with Disabilities
State House
Room 146
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Clerk Hurley and Clerk Carroll:

I write to submit the 2024 Annual Report of The Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth.

Please contact Shane Blundell (shane.blundell@mass.gov) with any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kiame Mahaniah".

Kiame Mahaniah, MD, MBA
Secretary



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Report Pursuant to Chapter 450 of the Acts of 2014 Regarding the MA Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Legislative Mandate

In accordance with Chapter 450 of the Acts of 2014, The Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth submits this annual report to the Governor, legislative clerks, the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities, and the Office of the Child Advocate.

Chapter 450 of the Acts of 2014 specifies “The commission shall submit an annual report by December 31 to the governor, the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities and the office of the child advocate. The report shall include, but not be limited to, the commission’s findings and any recommendations for regulatory or legislative action, with a timeline for implementation, cost estimates and finance mechanisms, and shall detail the extent of homelessness among unaccompanied homeless youth in the commonwealth and the progress made toward implementing the commission’s recommendations and any other efforts to address the needs of this population.¹”

The MA Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (a.k.a. Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Commission or UHYC) was established to provide targeted recommendations aimed at addressing the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in Massachusetts. The focus of the UHYC’s work includes, but is not limited to: “...(i) an analysis of the barriers to serving unaccompanied homeless youth who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender; (ii) an analysis of the barriers to serving unaccompanied youth under 18 years of age; (iii) an

¹ [Session Law - Acts of 2014 Chapter 450 \(malegislature.gov\)](http://malegislature.gov)

assessment of the impact of mandated reporting requirements on unaccompanied homeless youths' access to services; (iv) the commonwealth's ability to identify and connect with unaccompanied homeless youth; and (v) recommendations to reduce identified barriers to serving this population. The UHYC, in formulating its recommendations, shall take into account the best practices and policies in other states and jurisdictions.”² (See Appendix A: FY25 Commissioners of the MA Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth)

Performance-Based Contracts via Homeless Youth Services

Following Chapter 450's directive, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) has allocated performance-based contracts to 10 providers across the state, supported by an FY24 budget of \$11 million and an FY25 budget of \$10.451 million via line item 4000-0007. (See Appendix B: Map of EOHHS Homeless Youth Services Regions). The 10 funded Homeless Youth Services Lead Agencies in each region are:

Agency	FY25 Amount	Region
Bridge Over Troubled Waters Inc	\$1,825,000	Metro Boston
Catholic Charities of Fall River	\$500,000	Bristol County
City of Springfield	\$934,419	Hampden County
Community Action Pioneer Valley, Inc.	\$1,085,749	Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties
Community Teamwork Inc	\$1,048,000	North Middlesex
County of Barnstable	\$822,000	Cape Cod and the Islands
Father Bill's & Mainspring, Inc.	\$900,000	Plymouth and East Norfolk County
L U K Crisis Center Inc	\$1,000,000	Worcester County
Lynn Housing Authority	\$940,000	Essex County
South Middlesex Opportunity Council Inc.	\$749,340	Metro West

Additionally, EOHHS provides \$562,960 in funding to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education to provide shelter and services to college students who are experiencing homelessness.

² [Session Law - Acts of 2014 Chapter 450 \(malegislature.gov\)](https://malegislature.gov/SessionLaw/Acts/2014/Chapter450)

Prevalence & Characteristics of Youth Homelessness in Massachusetts - FY24

Youth & Young Adult (YYA) Homelessness in Massachusetts: A Snapshot

On any given night: Approximately **600+** YYA experience homelessness.

Over the course of the year: Nearly **3,000** YYA experience homelessness at some point.

Understanding youth homelessness in Massachusetts requires different methods of measurement. Point-in-Time counts and annual estimates each offer valuable insights, but they capture different aspects of the experience of homelessness among YYA.

Point-in-Time Counts: Understanding Crisis Needs

Point-in-Time (PIT) counts are essential for assessing the immediate, crisis-level needs of YYA experiencing homelessness. Conducted on a single night, these counts provide a snapshot of the number of young people homeless at a specific moment. They help to gauge the demand for emergency shelter beds, crisis services, and other immediate interventions. The *Massachusetts Youth Count* is another form of PIT count, conducted over the course of a month to offer a broader view of youth homelessness within a defined period. While similar in purpose to the HUD PIT count, the Youth Count captures those experiencing homelessness at a particular moment, using broader survey methods.

In FY24, the 2024 U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) PIT Count identified 601 unaccompanied YYA experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts. Similarly, the 2024 MA Youth Count identified 546 unaccompanied YYA experiencing homelessness, excluding parenting youth³. These closely aligned figures validate the consistency of the findings between the two counts and provide a clear picture of the scope of youth homelessness on any given night in the state.

Annual Estimates: Understanding Long-Term Experiences

While Point-in-Time counts shed light on immediate, crisis-level needs, annual estimates provide a more comprehensive understanding of youth homelessness over time. These estimates track the number of YYA who experience homelessness at any point during the year, capturing not just those who are homeless on a specific night but also those who experience repeated or prolonged periods of homelessness. Annual estimates help to identify YYA experiencing recurring

³ Since the resources available for young families differ from those for unaccompanied youth, counting parenting youth separately allows us to better understand their unique needs and ensure that housing and service systems are appropriately scaled to support each individual effectively, leading to more targeted program planning and resource allocation.

homelessness, even if they are not in a shelter on a given night. This broader perspective is critical for planning long-term interventions and services that address the underlying causes of homelessness.

Based on the 2024 HUD PIT count and MA Youth Count data, the UHYC estimates that 600+ unaccompanied youth and young adults currently experience homelessness on any given night in Massachusetts. However, MA Homeless Youth Services (HYS) data shows that nearly 3,000 youth and young adults experienced homelessness at some point over the course of the year. This disparity underscores the difference between the immediate crisis captured by Point-in-Time counts and the longer-term, ongoing challenges faced by YYA who experience homelessness intermittently or over extended periods.

Service Impact Data: Prevention and Rehousing Outcomes

In FY24, EOHHS-funded homeless youth service providers supported **2,730 YYA** experiencing homelessness, and **2,157 YYA** who were at risk of homelessness. These numbers highlight the growing need for prevention services, which are crucial in addressing homelessness before it occurs. Of those experiencing homelessness, more than **300 young adults** were successfully stabilized into housing. Additionally, **over 500 YYA** who sought prevention services reported successful housing stabilization after receiving case management and support.

It is important to note that many YYA experiencing homelessness are able to self-resolve their situations or may be lost to follow-up due to factors such as changing contact information or relocating, which impacts outcome data. Nonetheless, the data underscores the **importance and impact of upstream interventions**. By addressing housing instability early—before youth ever experience homelessness—we can reduce the likelihood that they will enter the system at all, helping to **make youth homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring**.

The work of the UHYC and Homeless Youth Services is critical in this regard, providing services that go upstream to prevent homelessness before it begins. These prevention-focused efforts not only help to stabilize young people in the short term but also contribute to long-term solutions, ensuring that youth can access stability and self-sufficiency without needing to experience the trauma of homelessness.

Characteristics of Youth Homelessness in Massachusetts

To better understand the specific needs of youth experiencing homelessness, the Massachusetts Youth Count, conducted annually by the UHYC, surveys unaccompanied youth and young adults under the age of 25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Since its inception in 2014, the Youth Count has provided valuable insights into the demographics, experiences, and service needs of this population, with nearly 10,000 surveys completed to date. This data plays a key role in shaping policies and services to better support youth experiencing homelessness.

In 2024, the UHYC presented its first **Research to Action Briefs** (see Appendix C) based on the 2022 Youth Count findings. These briefs highlighted three particularly vulnerable groups facing prolonged homelessness and significant barriers to services:

1. **Unaccompanied minors**
2. **Youth who have dropped out of school**
3. **Unsheltered youth**

The data consistently underscores the racial disparities among youth experiencing homelessness, particularly for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) youth, who continue to face disproportionately high rates of homelessness compared to their white peers. BIPOC youth, and Black youth in particular, have been found to face unique and compounded challenges, including reporting greater rates of exchanging sex to meet their basic needs. This has remained a consistent and concerning trend in both the 2022 and 2024 Youth Counts.

“When I was homeless, most shelters were booked. I turned to prostitution.”

— *19-year-old Black Youth Count Respondent*

In response to these findings, the UHYC has established three specialized workgroups aimed at addressing the specific needs of particularly vulnerable youth populations. They include:

- **Unaccompanied Minors Workgroup:** Co-chaired by staff from the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and Bridge Over Troubled Waters, this group is focused on improving services and outcomes for youth under 18 who are experiencing homelessness.
- **Young Adults Who Exchange Sex to Meet Their Basic Needs (ESN) Workgroup:** Co-chaired by staff from the Bureau of Community Health and Prevention at the Department of Public Health and MyLife My Choice, this group will address, prioritize, and move forward the recommendations outlined in the 2022 report [Young Adults Who Experience Homelessness or Housing Instability and Exchange Sex To Meet Their Needs](#), and align with the work of the Governor’s Council to Address Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Human Trafficking.
- **Parents Under 25:** Co-chaired by staff from the Department of Transitional Assistance and the Department of Public Health’s Office of Sexual Health and Youth Development, this group will identify resources and policies that support a reliable and systemic continuum of housing dedicated to both parents under age 18 and young parents between the ages of 18 and 25.

Key Findings from the 2024 Massachusetts Youth Count:

The 2024 Massachusetts Youth Count surveyed 1,412 youth and young adults across 147 municipalities, providing a comprehensive overview of the demographics, experiences, and service needs of unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY). Of these, 661 individuals met the Commission’s definition of UHY: youth aged 24 or younger who are not in the care of a parent or guardian and lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Notably, 17% of the 661 UHY were parenting. While these two populations—parenting youth and non-parenting youth—are typically reported separately when calculating youth homelessness prevalence, they are combined in this report for consistency. (See Appendix D for the full Youth Count 2024 report)

These 661 young people reported the following **living situations**⁴:

- 327 (49.1%) were sheltered in emergency shelters, transitional housing, hotels/motels, or other facilities.
- 220 (33.4%) were doubled up or couch surfing with family, a partner, or a friend.
- 114 (17.3%) were unsheltered, meaning they stayed outdoors or in places not meant for human habitation, with a notable increase in unsheltered youth aged 18-20.

BIPOC Youth: Persistent Disparities in Homelessness

BIPOC YYA continue to disproportionately experience homelessness, making up 62.4% of all unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY) in Massachusetts. While 2024 Youth Count data reveal a statistically significant decline in the number of BIPOC youth experiencing homelessness in the three years following the COVID-19 pandemic (2021-2024), compared to the three years prior (2017-2019), the overall overrepresentation remains concerning. This decrease is promising, but it highlights the ongoing need for targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by BIPOC youth.

Other Noteworthy Data:

- **Minors:** were more likely to be unsheltered compared to other subpopulations.
- **Not Identifying as Homeless:** 17% of respondents did not consider themselves homeless despite their living situations meeting the UHYC’s definition of homelessness.
- **Education:** Only 57% of 18–24-year-olds in the Youth Count had a high school diploma, compared to 90% of their peers statewide. This highlights the need to strengthen upstream practices within schools to better support youth facing housing or family instability—whether or not they self-identify as homeless.

⁴ Where they stayed the night before the Youth Count survey.

- **Income:** 74% of respondents reported some income, but 24% had no income—up from 16% in 2022—indicating ongoing economic instability and the need for better access to stable income sources.
- **Justice Involvement:** 20% of UHY reported involvement with the juvenile or adult justice system. However, juvenile justice involvement decreased significantly from 2022, reflecting **successful efforts by the Department of Youth Services (DYS) to improve housing stability** for youth exiting the system.
- **Child Welfare:** 30.7% of unaccompanied youth reported having been in foster care, a consistent figure over the years. However, **the number of unsheltered youth with foster care involvement has decreased**, indicating improved connections to homeless youth services.
- **Foster Care and BIPOC Youth:** 65.5% of UHY with foster care involvement identified as BIPOC, nearly 7% higher than those without foster care involvement. BIPOC youth are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system and this disparity is highlighted in the overrepresentation of BIPOC youth in the homelessness systems, underscoring the compounded challenges faced by these youth.
- **Exploitation and Exchanging Sex:** Data from both the 2022 and 2024 Youth Counts indicate that certain subpopulations of youth experiencing homelessness report a disproportionately high incidence of trading sex compared to the overall population of homeless youth. These subpopulations include: BIPOC youth, LGBTQ+ youth, those with foster care involvement, and those who left home before the age of 18, signaling the ongoing vulnerability of these youth to exploitation and exploitation-related risks.

Concluding Insights from Youth Count 2024

The 2024 Massachusetts Youth Count reveals critical insights into the experiences of unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY) in MA, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive services in shelter, education, long-term housing, and economic stability. There have been some positive developments—such as improved connections to homeless youth services for those aging out of foster care—however, several systemic challenges persist. Specifically, the overrepresentation of BIPOC youth in homelessness systems highlights the compounded barriers these youth face. Additionally, the continued prevalence of survival sex among vulnerable populations points to gaps in support and protection.

To make youth homelessness **rare, brief, and non-recurring**, it is essential to maintain a focus on prevention, crisis intervention, and long-term housing stabilization. Achieving this goal will require continued collaboration, targeted funding, and innovative approaches. By investing in the housing stability of youth and young adults, we are not only helping them overcome homelessness but also empowering them to become the future teachers, doctors, artists, and leaders of Massachusetts.

Recommendations for Legislative and Regulatory Action

To achieve the goal of preventing and ending youth homelessness, the UHYC recommends the following for FY25 and FY26:

1. **Sustained Funding:** Continued investment in the UHYC and EOHHS-Homeless Youth Services through line items 4000-0007 and 4000-0300 is critical to sustaining both prevention and early intervention services, reducing the need for costly emergency responses and preventing youth from becoming homeless in the first place.
2. **Enhance Prevention and Access to Resources for Minors:** Implement targeted communication strategies to better inform unaccompanied minors about available support services, while exploring policies that ensure safe pathways for seeking help.
3. **Enhance Support for BIPOC Youth:** BIPOC youth make up 62.4% of UHY and 65.5% of youth with foster care involvement, highlighting their disproportionate risk of homelessness. To address this, targeted interventions are needed to provide culturally responsive services, combat racial discrimination, and prevent exploitation. Efforts should be made to elevate BIPOC voices in leadership positions within youth homelessness initiatives. Additionally, expanding access to stable housing for BIPOC youth aging out of foster care is critical to breaking the cycle of homelessness.
4. **Strengthen Data Collection and Research:** Continued investment in initiatives like the Massachusetts Youth Count is essential to track trends, assess service gaps, and refine strategies. The resulting Research to Action briefs provide vital insights that help translate data into practical, evidence-based solutions. Supporting and implementing the recommendations from these briefs will be critical in adapting interventions to the evolving needs of homeless youth. Additionally, continue to support ongoing efforts to enhance data collection from homeless youth services and their network of funded providers.

By maintaining and expanding funding for prevention-focused initiatives and addressing the systemic inequities that contribute to youth homelessness, Massachusetts can continue its progress toward the goal of making youth homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

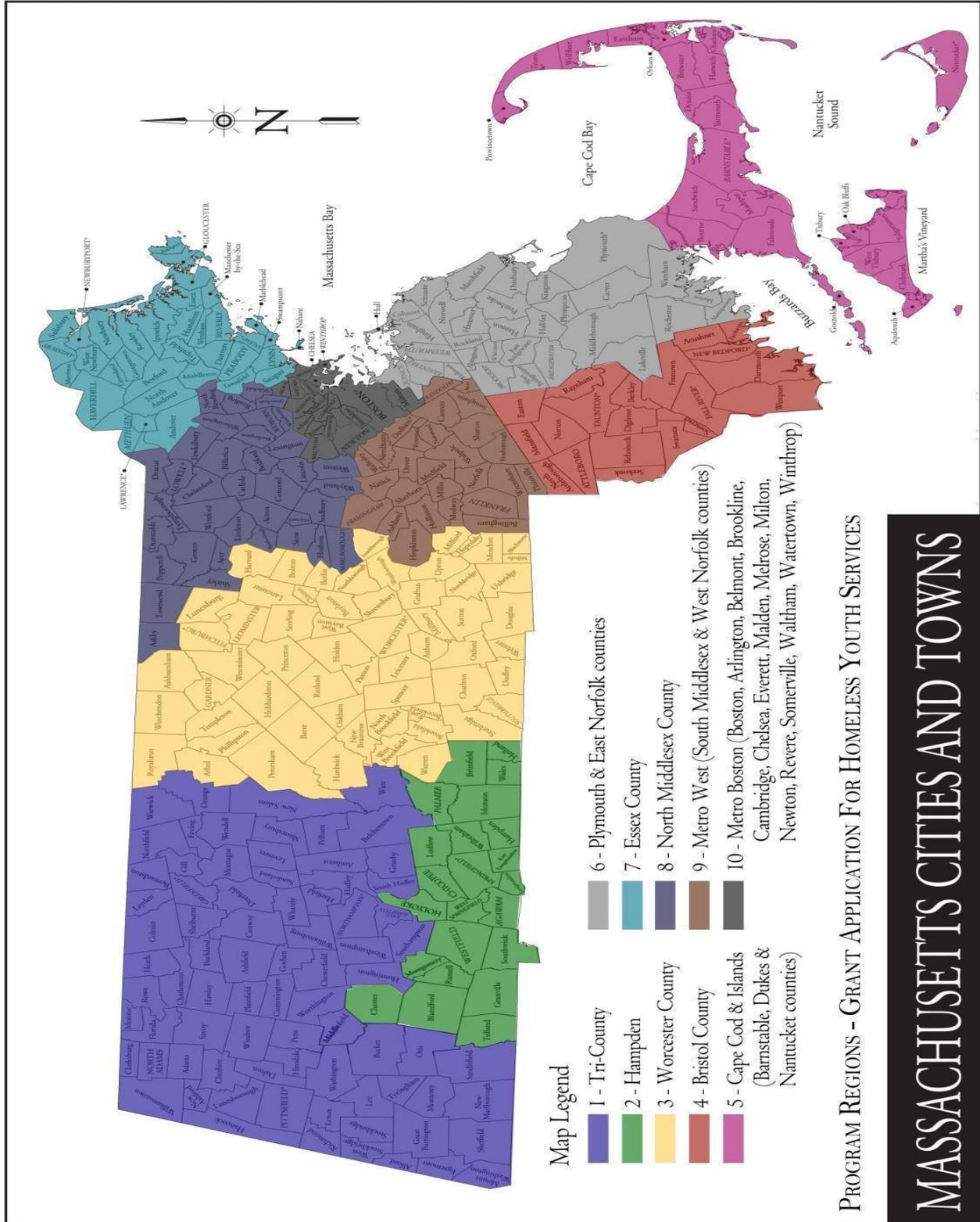
APPENDIX A

FY25 Commissioners of the MA Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (UHYC)	
Seats	Current Appointment or Designee
Secretary of Health and Human Services or Designee- CHAIR	Alice Colegrove, designee
Senate Chair of Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities	Sen. Robyn K. Kennedy
House Chair of Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities	Rep. Jay Livingstone
Member of the Senate	Sen. Lydia Edwards
Member of the House	Rep. James O'Day
One member Who Shall be Appointed by the Senate Minority Leader	Sen. Patrick O'Connor
One member Who Shall be Appointed by the House Minority Leader	Rep. Hannah Kane
The Commissioner of Children and Families (DCF) or a designee	Molly O'Neil, designee
The Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) or a designee	Shirley Fan-Chan, designee
The Commissioner of Department of Public Health (DPH) or a designee	Jennifer Halstrom and Stacy Lynch, DPH BSAS designees
The Commissioner of Mental Health (DMH) or a designee	Heidi Holland, designee
The Director of Medicaid or a designee	Madeline Wachman, designee
The Commissioner of Transitional Assistance (DTA) or a designee	Kamaria Moore-Hollis, designee
The Under Secretary for Housing and Community Development (Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities) or a designee	Gordon Calkins, designee

The Commissioner of Youth Services (DYS) or a designee	Rebecca Moore, designee
Direct Service Provider who works with Unaccompanied Homeless Youth- Appointed by the Governor	Elisabeth Jackson, Bridge Over Troubled Waters
Direct Service Provider who works with Unaccompanied Homeless Youth- Appointed by the Governor	Lisa Goldblat-Grace, My Life My Choice
Direct Service Provider who works with Unaccompanied Homeless Youth- Appointed by the Governor	Phil Ringwood, Dial/SELF
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, Inc.	Kelly Turley
The Mass Taskforce on Youth Aging out of DCF Care	Rachel Gwaltney
Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice	Deb Silva
Mass Equality Org, The Campaign for Equality Inc.	Deborah Shields
Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance	Caitlin Golden
Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth	Aaron Gonzales
Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition, Inc.	Tre'Andre Carmel Valentine
Youth who has experienced homelessness- Appointed by the Child Advocate	Thaliana Paulino
Youth who has experienced homelessness- Appointed by the Child Advocate	Brianna Howland
Youth who has experienced homelessness- Appointed by the Child Advocate	Deandre Avant

APPENDIX B

Map of EOHHS Homeless Youth Services Regions



Appendix C: Research to Action Briefs
(See attached)

Appendix D: Youth Count 2024 Final Report
(See attached)