

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING & LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Maura T. Healey, Governor ♦ Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor ♦ Edward M. Augustus, Jr., Secretary

DECLARATION – EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FAMILY SHELTER

Pursuant to 760 CMR 67.10, as Secretary of the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, I hereby declare that I have determined, as detailed herein, that the Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter system is no longer able to meet all current and projected demand for shelter from households eligible for EA, considering the facts and circumstances presently existing in the Commonwealth.

I have made this determination based on the following facts and circumstances:

For the past year, the Emergency Assistance program in Massachusetts has been expanding at an extraordinary rate to meet rising demand leading Governor Healey to declare a State of Emergency on August 8, 2023. This demand has been driven primarily by surging numbers of newly arriving migrant families, high cost and limited availability of housing, and reduced exits of families in long-term emergency shelter stays. As of today, the Emergency Assistance program is in a projected FY24 deficiency and is expected to require expenditures beyond the appropriations from the FY24 General Appropriations Act, and beyond the supplemental budget request filed by Governor Healey in September 2023, to fund the contracts and services to support the number of families currently in the system. As further detailed below, further expansion is also unsustainable from a capacity and operational perspective.

The FY24 General Appropriations Act appropriation for the Emergency Assistance program includes funding to support 4,100 families and approximately 4,700 units. As of October 27, 2023, there were 7,268 families in the shelter system. This reflects a 77% caseload increase over the caseload contemplated in the FY24 budget and is the largest number of families ever living in EA family shelters at one time since the Department of Housing and Community Development (predecessor to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities) assumed responsibility for the Emergency Assistance program. The Emergency Assistance program line item, 7004-0101, received a \$325 million appropriation in the FY24 General Appropriations Act, which was approved on August 9, 2023. That line item in the FY24 General Appropriations Act was consistent with the amount budgeted in the Governor's House 1 budget recommendation filed in March, and was intended to support 4,100 families. As of September 2023, when Governor Healey's supplemental budget request was filed, the number of families in the Emergency Assistance shelter system exceeded 6,100. At the current time, the line item has approximately \$535 million in commitments to pay through FY24, based on current caseload of 7,268 families in the shelter system. This amounts to a projected FY24 deficiency in line item 7004-0101 of approximately \$210 million, and this projected deficiency does not include additional resources needed for wraparound services, school supports, and community supports.

At current rates of entries into and exits from EA shelter, the number of eligible families in shelter would continue to increase to more than 13,000 households in shelter by fiscal year end (if sufficient shelter units

could be found to accommodate that many households). With the average length of stay growing each month (averaging 13.6 months as of the first quarter of FY24), the pressure on the Emergency Assistance

program will be long-term in nature, with the families entering shelter today expected to remain through FY25.

The current rate of expansion in the Emergency Assistance program is unsustainable. Since January 2023, EOHLC has engaged in extensive efforts to increase the number of shelter units to meet the need. EOHLC entered into emergency contracts with service providers and sought shelter units across the Commonwealth, with shelter units located in approximately 90 cities and towns. Given increasingly critical provider shortages, the Governor called up 250 members of the Massachusetts National Guard to serve at shelter hotels that would otherwise be unstaffed, lacking coordination of services for food, basic needs, medical, and transportation.

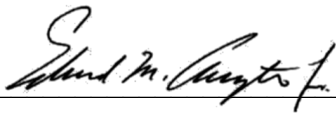
It is no longer possible to secure additional space that is suitable and safe for use as shelter beyond a capacity of 7,500 families.

The Commonwealth does not have enough space, service providers, or funds to safely expand shelter capacity any longer. For the reasons described above, I determine that the maximum capacity of the Emergency Assistance program is approximately 7,500 families.

Pursuant to 760 CMR 67.10, EOHLC is directed to issue appropriate guidance to implement this declaration.

This Declaration shall be in effect from November 1, 2023, to February 28, 2024 and may be extended pursuant to 760 CMR 67.10.

This Declaration shall be posted on EOHLC's website at [Emergency Housing Assistance Programs | Mass.gov](https://www.eohlc.mass.gov/emergency-housing-assistance-programs).



10-31-2023
