



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

House of Representatives

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House Minority Leader Jones' statement on emergency shelter system

BOSTON – House Minority Leader Bradley H. Jones, Jr. (R-North Reading) released the following statement after reports that the Healey Administration failed to conduct criminal background checks on applicants for the state's emergency shelter program:

"The Healey Administration's admission that it failed to carry out criminal background checks on applicants seeking emergency shelter assistance is completely unacceptable and represents a serious betrayal of the public's trust. The Administration's handling of the situation has been a total disaster, with the failure to carry out the most basic of public safety protocols needlessly placing other people in harm's way by housing them alongside dangerous criminals.

The Administration has long maintained that it was conducting extensive background checks of all applicants seeking shelter assistance, but now we know that was not the case. The fact that the Administration has no idea how many individuals with a criminal record are currently residing in the state's shelter system is cause for alarm. With over 1,000 recorded serious incidents taking place in the state's shelters between January of 2023 and August of 2024 – including rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence – there are more than enough examples that highlight why these comprehensive background checks are so important.

This is just the latest example of the Administration's failure to provide proper oversight of the emergency shelter program, which continues to drain valuable state resources. Governor Healey is now seeking \$425 million in supplemental shelter funding, but there should be no more funding approved for the program until meaningful reforms are implemented. It is time for the Healey Administration to come clean with the Commonwealth's taxpayers and explain how this was allowed to happen and why it has gone on for so long. A complete top to bottom review of the program is needed to ensure that not only all of those applying for emergency shelter assistance are properly vetted at the point of entry, but also to identify those individuals who are already in the system but should not be. Dangerous criminals should be removed from the program immediately, and swift legal action taken.

It has become abundantly clear that this program is wildly unsustainable and unmanageable for the Healey Administration, and it is well beyond time to change course. Whether it's incompetence, intransigence or negligence, changes must be made. It's time for heads to roll."

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