



ONE FAMILY INC. 2023-2024 ADVOCACY AGENDA

STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING AND ENDING FAMILY HOMELESSNESS

For descriptions, current status and lead sponsors of legislation supported by One Family, please visit bit.ly/OneFamily2023-2024Bills

1 Legislation, investments, and policies specifically focused on ensuring that all families have a home where they can thrive

→ End all forms of family homelessness:

Public policy supported by One Family:

- End family homelessness in all its forms, including families living “doubled-up.”

→ Provide emergency rental assistance to all who need it, so families experiencing a housing crisis don't lose their homes

Public policy supported by One Family:

- Help families remain in their homes by making sure emergency rental assistance is readily accessible to all households that need it.
- Restore “upstream” access to RAFT rental assistance (Residential Assistance for Families in Transition) - eliminate the administratively-imposed rule restricting RAFT to tenants whose landlords have already taken steps to evict them, when it may be too late.

Legislation:

- Increase state budget funding for RAFT rental assistance in FY25.
- Restore the \$10,000 annual RAFT cap, with flexibility to exceed the cap when needed to help a family keep their home.
- H.1312/S.856, *An Act providing upstream homelessness prevention assistance to families, youth, and adults*

→ Protect families from eviction, and from the stigma of eviction case court records:

Public policy supported by One Family:

- Protect families from eviction by providing free legal representation to households with low and moderate incomes in eviction cases.
- Protect families from eviction while an application for rental assistance is pending.
- Facilitate sealing of eviction case court records, so that families are not “marked for life” by the mere existence of court records.

Legislation:

- H.1731/S.864, *An Act promoting access to counsel and homelessness prevention in Massachusetts*
- H.1682/S.1048, *An Act relative to summary process and rental assistance*
- H.1690/S.956, *An Act promoting housing opportunity and mobility through eviction sealing* (The HOMES Act)
- H.4138, *The Affordable Homes Act*

→ End discrimination based on race and housing assistance status:

Public policy supported by One Family:

- Eliminate racial discrimination in rental housing, and discrimination against people with housing vouchers.

Legislation:

- H.359/S.180, *An act to end housing discrimination in the Commonwealth* (bit.ly/End-MA-housing-discrimination)

→ Invest in long-term housing solutions, with an emphasis on racial equity:

Public policy supported by One Family:

- Increase the availability of affordable homes, rental vouchers, and other housing supports that provide housing stability while families work to increase their income and afford market-rate homes.
- Expand access to sustainable homeownership opportunities - with particular emphasis on People of Color historically denied the opportunity to own a home.

State legislation and public investment:

- Increase state budget funding in FY25 for MVRP (Mass. Rental Voucher Program) and public housing.
- H.4138, *The Affordable Homes Act*
- H.1351, *An Act codifying the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program*, and S.888, *An Act relative to the Massachusetts rental voucher program*
- H.1300, S.863, S.870 - Leverage the Housing Development Incentive Program to build affordable homes.
- Increase investment in the Commonwealth Builder program, which funds construction of single-family homes and condominiums for families with moderate incomes, especially in Communities of Color.
- Increase investment in first-time homebuyer programs, including MassDreams and STASH (Savings Toward Affordable Sustainable Homeownership), which are open to people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, but have been shown to be particularly beneficial to People of Color seeking to purchase a home.

Federal legislation and public investment:

- Increase investment in housing vouchers and in creation of affordable homes.

→ Help families transition from homelessness to a home

Public policy supported by One Family:

- Help families exit homelessness with MRVP housing vouchers and HomeBASE rental assistance.
- Ensure families are placed into shelters within or near their home communities and provided transportation resources as needed, to minimize job loss and other barriers to self-sufficiency, avoid forcing children to change schools, and help families maintain access to health care.
- Build self-sufficiency supports into the Emergency Assistance shelter system that continue after shelter exit, including access to employment and training resources such as the MassHire Career Centers, with transportation provided as needed.

Legislation and state budget funding:

- Increase state budget funding for HomeBase in FY25.
- H.1297/S.890, *An Act promoting housing stability for families by strengthening the HomeBASE program*
- H.145/S.86, *An Act improving emergency housing assistance for children and families experiencing homelessness*
- H.1301/S.868, *An Act to eliminate asset limits for homeless shelters*

2 Legislation, investments, and policies to lift up families on their journeys to self-sufficiency

→ Provide one-on-one support focused on higher education achievement and career success

Public policy supported by One Family:

- Continue state budget funding for the One Family Scholars program.
- Long-term policy objective - Establish a line item in the state budget to provide coaching that promotes self-sufficiency and asset-building to anyone eligible for state or federal housing assistance or family shelter.

→ Help families build assets, with an emphasis on racial equity

Public policy supported by One Family:

- Close the racial wealth gap.
- Enhance tax credits that help families along their journeys to self-sufficiency.

Legislation and state budget funding:

- Family-sustaining tax credits
 - S. 1798, *An Act to reduce poverty by expanding the EITC and the child and family tax credit*
 - H.2762/S.1793, *An Act to increase family stabilization through the earned income tax credit*
 - H.2761/S.1792, *An Act establishing a child and family tax credit*
- Increase state budget funding in FY25 for VITA sites (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites) to help families with low and moderate incomes access tax credits.
- Matched-savings
 - Continue state budget funding in FY25 and beyond.
 - H.1023/S.628, *An Act to promote economic mobility through matched savings*
- Establish a Baby Bonds Trust Fund - H.1157/S.1999, *An Act addressing the racial wealth gap*

→ Eliminate the "Cliff Effect"

Public policy supported by One Family:

- Eliminate the "Cliff Effect" – a sudden decrease or loss of public benefits due to a modest increase in income, leaving the family no better off or worse off – because it discourages increasing employment income, and is a major barrier to families progressing towards self-sufficiency.
- Support successful implementation of the Cliff Effect mitigation pilot project authorized and funded by the Massachusetts Legislature in 2022.

→ Invest in public higher education, with a particular focus on racial equity

Public policy supported by One Family:

- Increase investment in public higher education - reversing the reduction in per-student investment that has occurred since 2001 - and expand access to scholarships and college success supports.
- Support the Mass. Department of Higher Education's [Equity Agenda](#).

Legislation:

- Increase state budget funding in FY25 and beyond for higher education access and success supports, including MassReconnect, MASSGrant Plus Expansion, free community college for all Massachusetts residents, and expansion of the SUCCESS fund to invest in wraparound supports for historically disadvantaged students at all public colleges and universities in Massachusetts.
- S.816/H.1260, *An Act committing to higher education the resources to insure a strong and healthy public higher education system* (the CHERISH Act)

→ Support student-parents

Public policy supported by One Family:

- Eliminate food insecurity among college students in Massachusetts, including the one in four students raising a family.
- Forgive student loans for student-parents and others for whom education debt is a barrier to achieving self-sufficiency.

Legislation:

- S.835/H.1293, *An Act establishing the Massachusetts Hunger-Free Campus Initiative*
- Increase state budget funding for the Hunger-Free Campus Initiative in FY25.

→ Improve access to affordable childcare

Public policy supported by One Family:

- Ensure that all families, including families experiencing homelessness and housing instability and the families of student-parents, can access affordable and high-quality childcare, to support self-sufficiency and healthy child development.

State legislation:

- S.301/H.489, *An Act providing affordable and accessible high quality early education and care*
- Increase state budget funding to provide access to affordable childcare for families with low and moderate incomes.

Federal legislation:

- Increase investment in access to affordable childcare for families with low and moderate incomes, including CCDBG (the Child Care Development Block Grant), the CCAMPIS (Child Care Access Means Parents in School) program for student-parents in higher education, and Head Start.

→ End withholding of college transcripts

Public policy supported by One Family:

- Require colleges to provide transcript copies to students upon request, without regard to a student's outstanding bills, to remove a barrier to self-sufficiency.

Legislation:

- H.1277, *An Act ensuring students' access to academic transcripts*