



**Massachusetts  
Taxpayers Foundation**

**Examining Recent Trends in Rental  
Assistance & Emergency Assistance  
Shelter Spending**



# Outline

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- III. Funding & Spending on EA in FY 2024
- IV. Impact of the EA Shelter System Crisis on Overall Housing Investment
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# A Note on What's Not Included

With Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter program costs at historic highs, questions have arisen about the long-term sustainability of the program and other state-funded supports to prevent and reduce family homelessness. This report aims to help stakeholders and policymakers address these concerns by assessing recent funding and policy changes for the eight programs that make up the majority of the housing support and stabilization efforts funded through the operating budget. It focuses mainly on **programs that assist families**, such as EA shelter, and examines their funding, structure, impact, and sustainability.

This report does not include an analysis of recent funding and policy changes for **individual homelessness or supportive housing**, which are other important aspects of housing stabilization and homelessness prevention in Massachusetts.

- **Homeless Individual Shelters** provide temporary shelter to individuals 18 years or older experiencing homelessness. They are currently funded by the state at \$110 million, representing on average 35% of providers' total costs. In contrast, the EA system is entirely funded by the state and is also subject to the right-to-shelter law, which has been in place since 1983 and guarantees an automatic right to emergency housing for families with children and pregnant women. Right to shelter does not apply to homeless individuals.
- **Supportive Housing** provides stable, permanent housing for individuals with complex needs and services to promote housing stability and well-being. It is funded through a combination of operating budget line-items and earmarks; and the state also approved authorizations in the Affordable Homes Act to support the expansion of supportive housing through the capital budget. The Affordable Homes Act supports the creation of the Supportive Housing Pool and includes loan programs that finance the production of supportive housing.

Additional details on funding for Homeless Individual Shelters and Supportive Housing are included in the appendix of this report.



# Sources of Housing Funding

# Operating and Capital Budgets

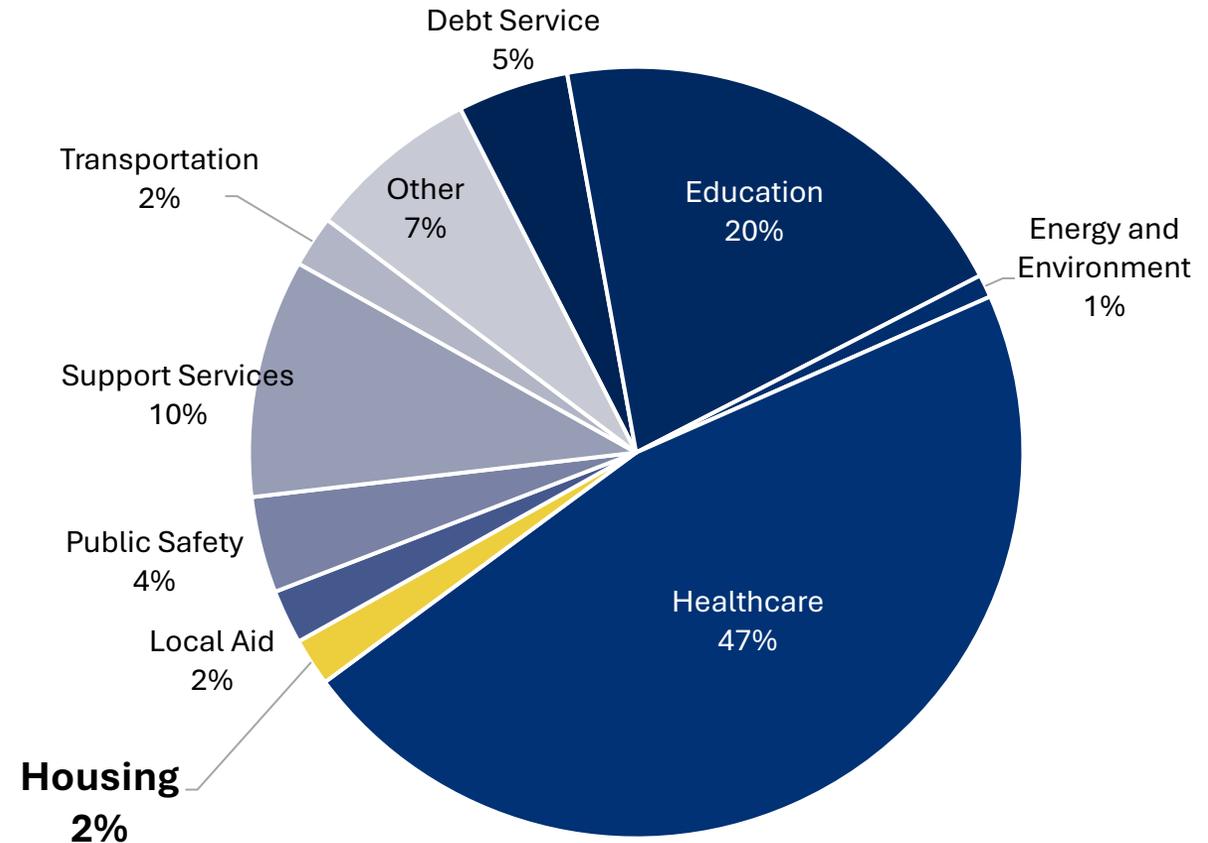
Each year, Massachusetts produces two distinct budget documents that include a variety of programs and funding streams for housing production, preservation, stabilization, and financial assistance:

1. The state's annual **operating budget** funds the ongoing operations of state government and includes funding for various housing stabilization, homelessness prevention, and housing financial assistance programs. The seven rental assistance programs and one Emergency Assistance shelter program analyzed in this report are supported by the operating budget.
2. The **capital budget** primarily supports the long-term infrastructure of the state, including the majority of the state's investment in housing production and preservation; as well as the building and maintenance of the state's physical housing infrastructure. The **FY 2025 – 2029 Capital Investment Plan (CIP)** allocates \$2.0 billion over five years for housing production and preservation. This investment plan is informed, in part, by the **[Affordable Homes Act \(AHA\)](#)**, the state's most recent Housing Bond Bill.

The focus of this report is investments made through the state's operating budget and various supplemental spending bills; which provide nearly all of the resources for state rental assistance and the EA shelter program.

# Big Picture: State Budget Spending

*FY 2025 GAA Spending by Category*

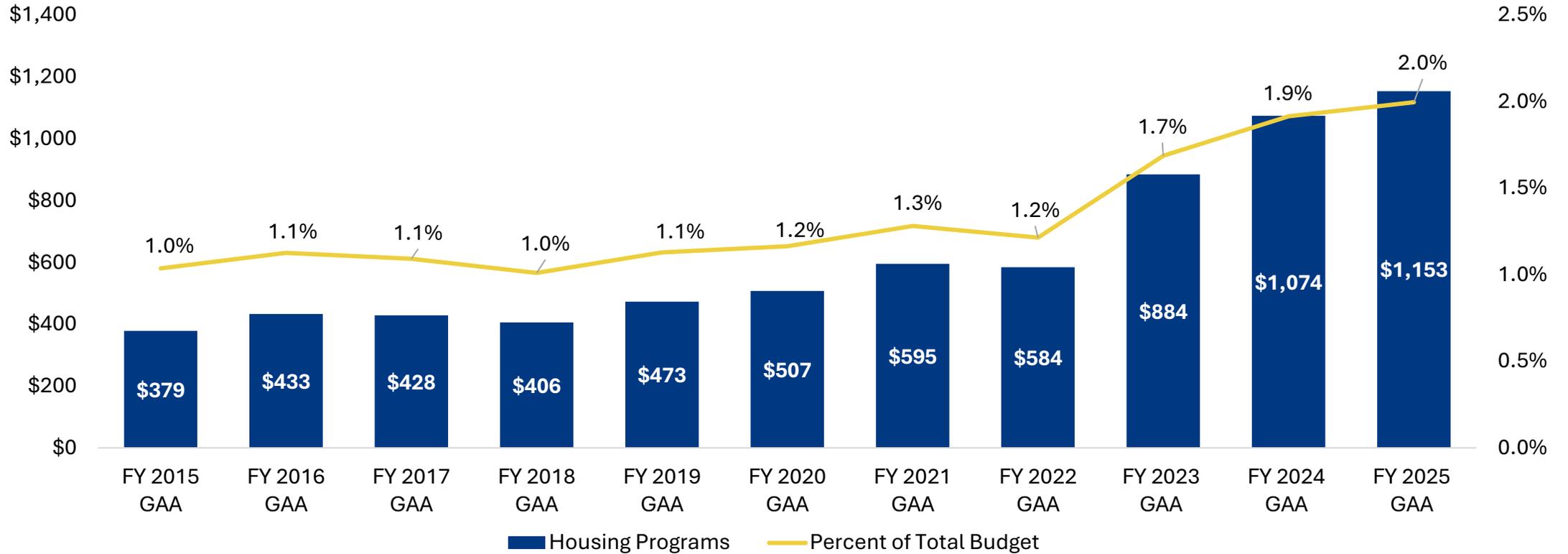


The state's current operating budget – also known as the FY 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA) – included **\$58.78 billion** in total line-item spending.

- A **\$1.72 billion** (3.1 percent) increase over the FY 2024 GAA.

In the FY 2025 budget, Housing-related spending totaled **\$1.15 billion**, equal to **2% of total line-item spending**.

# Housing Spending Over Time (10-Year)



Between FY 2015 and FY 2025, housing spending in the operating budget increased by **\$775 million** (205%). This growth also reflects an increase in the share of the operating budget dedicated to housing, from **1% to 2%**. These increases reflect funding in the annual operating budget and exclude supplemental appropriations.



# Rental & Emergency Assistance Shelter Programs

MTF's analysis of housing-related spending in the state budget will focus on two cohorts of programs:

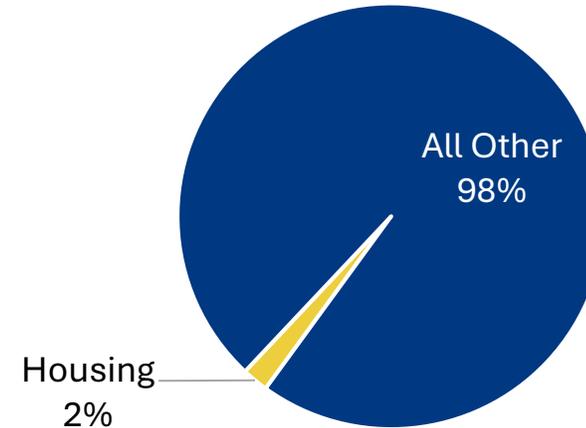
- Rental Assistance Programs (7 accounts)
- Emergency Assistance Shelter (1 account)

Rental assistance & emergency assistance shelter make up most of the state's spending on housing in the operating budget.

In the FY 2025 GAA, funding for these 8 programs totaled **\$845 million**.

- 73% of all housing-related spending.
- 1.5% of overall state budget spending.

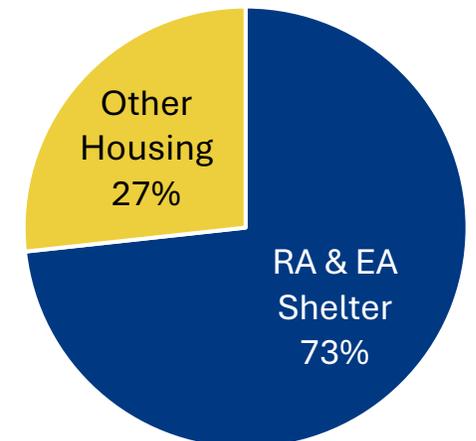
*FY 2025 GAA Spending*



FY 2025 GAA Spending:  
**\$57.78 billion**

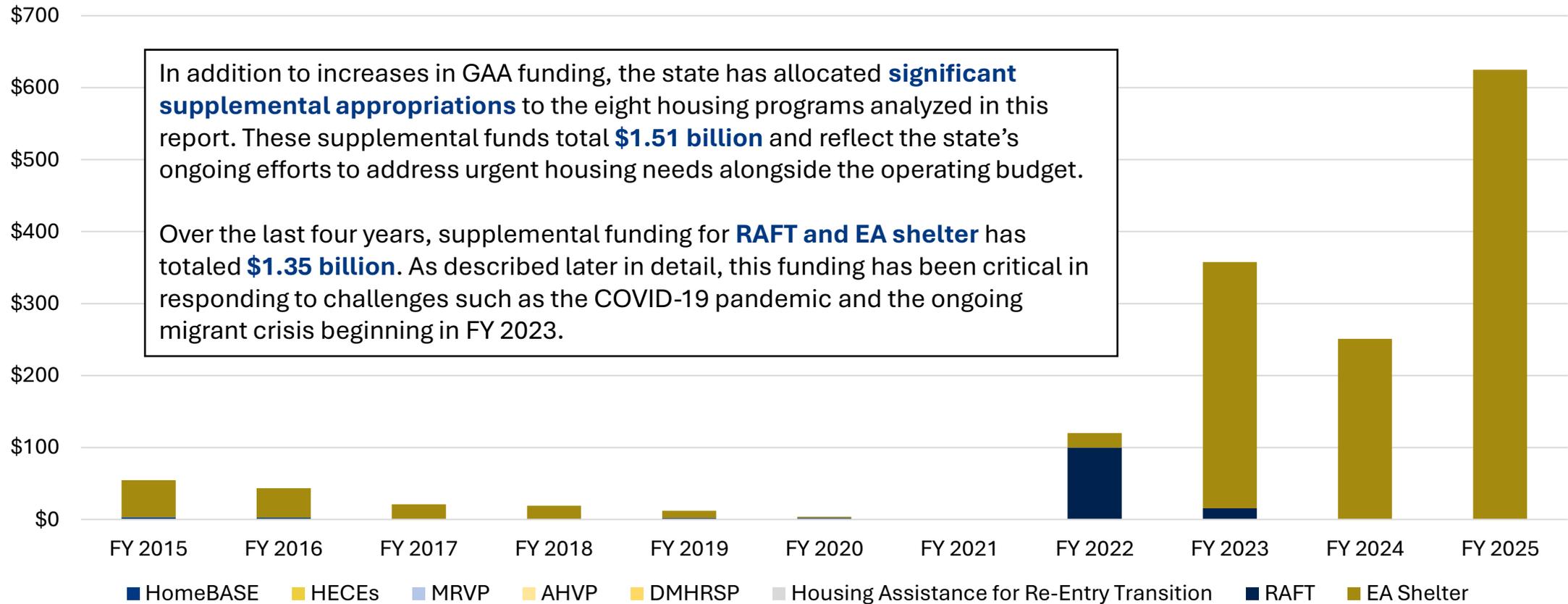
*FY 2025 GAA Housing Spending*

Housing Spending:  
**\$1.54 billion**



# Supplemental Spending Over Time (10-Year)

**Supplemental Spending for Rental Assistance Programs & EA Shelter, FY 2015 – FY 2025**



A night view of a city skyline, likely Boston, featuring several prominent skyscrapers and a waterfront with boats. The buildings are illuminated, and their lights reflect on the water. The sky is a deep blue with some light clouds. A dark blue banner is overlaid at the bottom of the image, containing the text.

# **Rental Assistance Programs & Emergency Assistance Shelter**

# Identified Rental Assistance Budget Line-Items

The [HomeBASE](#) program (7004-0108) assists families residing in Massachusetts to secure stable housing if they are living in Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter, eligible for EA shelter, living in a domestic violence shelter, or participating in a residential use treatment program.

[Housing Consumer Education Centers](#) (7004-3036) provide free housing-related services and counseling to support families along the housing continuum, including homelessness prevention, housing stability, and economic stability

The [Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program](#) (7004-9024) offers rental assistance in the form of vouchers to families with low incomes, including individuals, elderly persons, and individuals with disabilities.

The [Alternative Housing Voucher Program](#) (7004-9030) offers rental assistance in the form of vouchers for 1-bedroom apartments to low-income individuals with disabilities under the age of 60.

The [DMH Rental Subsidy Program](#) (7004-9033) provides rental subsidies to assist Department of Mental Health clients in securing stable housing.

The [Housing Assistance for Re-Entry Transition](#) program (7004-9034) provides housing support to individuals transitioning from incarceration back into their communities.

The [Residential Assistance for Families in Transition \(RAFT\)](#) (7004-9316) is a homelessness prevention program that provides financial assistance to households or individuals at risk of homelessness or losing their housing.

The [Emergency Assistance \(EA\)](#) program (7004-0101) provides shelter and rehousing services to families with low incomes with children and pregnant individuals experiencing homelessness.

# HomeBASE – Program Description

The HomeBASE program assists families residing in Massachusetts to secure stable housing if they are living in Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter, eligible for EA shelter, living in a domestic violence shelter, or participating in a residential use treatment program.

Eligibility Guidelines	Financial Assistance & Benefits
<p>To be eligible for HomeBASE, families must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet <a href="#">program income standards</a> (115% FPG).</li> <li>• Have children under the age of 21 or be pregnant.</li> <li>• Be homeless due to a no-fault emergency, no-fault eviction, health &amp; safety risk, or fleeing domestic violence.</li> </ul>	<p>Families eligible for HomeBASE may receive up to \$30K over 2 years, with the possibility of an additional \$15K in year 3. This is inclusive of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to \$5K for outstanding rent or utilities arrears.</li> <li>• Up to \$2.5K for furniture costs.</li> </ul>
Income Contributions & Other Requirements	Eligible Uses of Assistance
<p>Families participating in HomeBASE must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute at least 30% of their gross monthly income towards rent.</li> <li>• Meet the requirements of their housing stabilization plan, developed in collaboration with a case manager.</li> </ul>	<p>HomeBASE may pay for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly rent payments.</li> <li>• Security deposits, first and last month's rest, broker's fees.</li> <li>• Rent and utility arrears.</li> <li>• Furniture and moving expenses.</li> </ul>

# HomeBASE – Recent Funding History

In the FY 2025 GAA, HomeBASE was funded at **\$57.32 million**, representing:

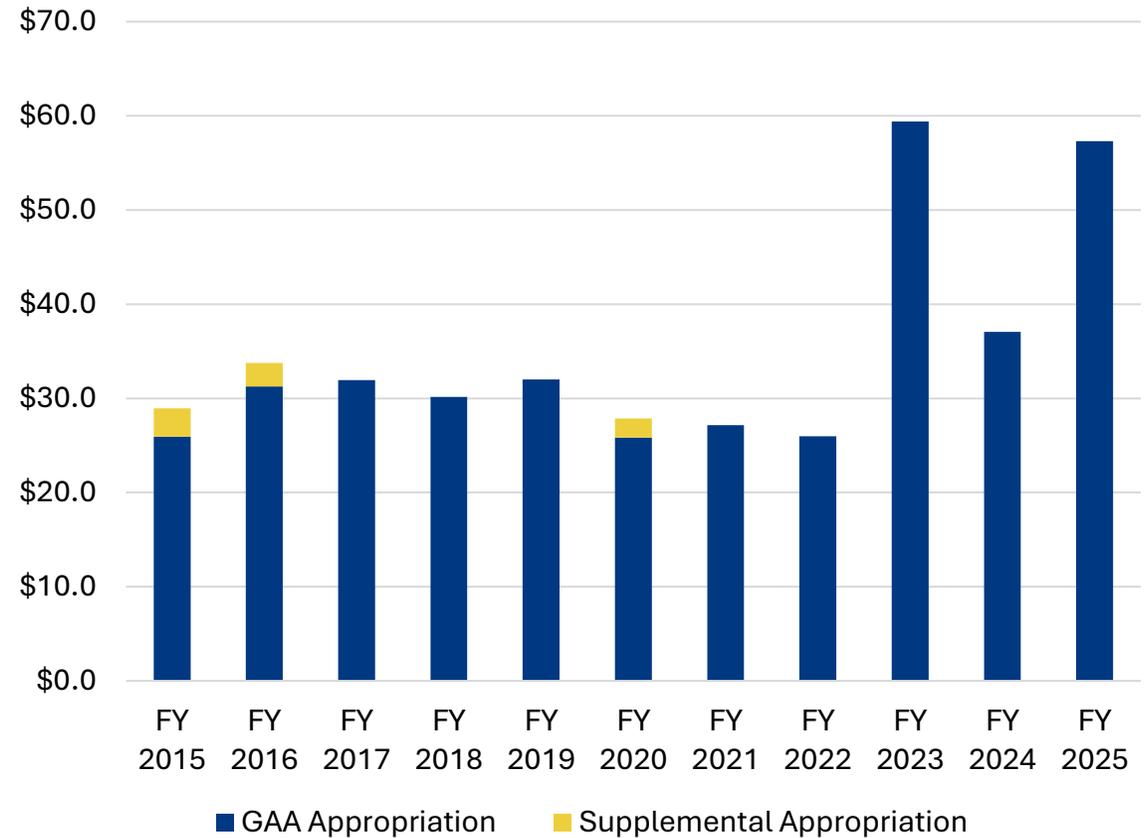
- **5%** of overall housing spending in the budget.
- **6.8%** of rental assistance program spending.
- From FY 2015 – FY 2025, funding increased by **\$31.4 million** (121%).

The largest increases in HomeBASE spending occurred during the pandemic:

- In FY 2022, the \$10,000 **cap on assistance was lifted** due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency, allowing families to receive more support to help them cope with the challenges brought on by the pandemic.
- In FY 2023, the benefit amount cap on assistance was adjusted to \$20,000 over 24 months.
- In FY 2024, the cap on assistance was adjusted to \$30,000 over 24 months; this was sustained in FY 2025.

In FY 2024, **2,454** families received HomeBASE assistance and based on available funding, the average cost per family was **\$15,106**, or approximately **\$1,259** per family each month.\*

**HomeBASE – 10 Year Funding History**



\*Assumes all funding supports direct assistance and related administrative costs.

# Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs)

Housing consumer education centers (HCECs) provide free housing-related services and counseling to support families along the housing continuum, including homelessness prevention, housing stability, and economic stability. The program plays a critical role in stabilizing households across the state by ensuring access to housing education and promoting long-term housing solutions.

9 Regional HCECs	Information, Referral, and Case Management	RAFT Application Assistance and Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Each HCEC is operated by regional housing agencies across Massachusetts.</li><li>• Funding for HCECs is awarded through a competitive grant process.</li></ul>	<p>HCECs connect people with resources for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Financial support</li><li>• Legal assistance</li><li>• Housing search services</li><li>• Move-in and transition support</li><li>• Help with furniture and furnishings</li><li>• Budgeting assistance</li><li>• Utility support</li><li>• Assistance with arrears</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The 9 regional HCECs are among 11 agencies that administer the <a href="#">Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)</a> program.</li><li>• HCECs are responsible for the day-to-day operations of RAFT statewide, handle applicant triage, provide information on community-based resources, review RAFT applications, administer payments, and report outcomes.</li></ul>

# HCECs – Recent Funding History

In the FY 2025 GAA, HCECs were funded at **\$8.97 million**, representing:

- **0.8%** of overall housing spending in the budget.
- **1.1%** of rental assistance program spending.
- From FY 2015 – FY 2025, funding increased by **\$6.83 million** (319%).

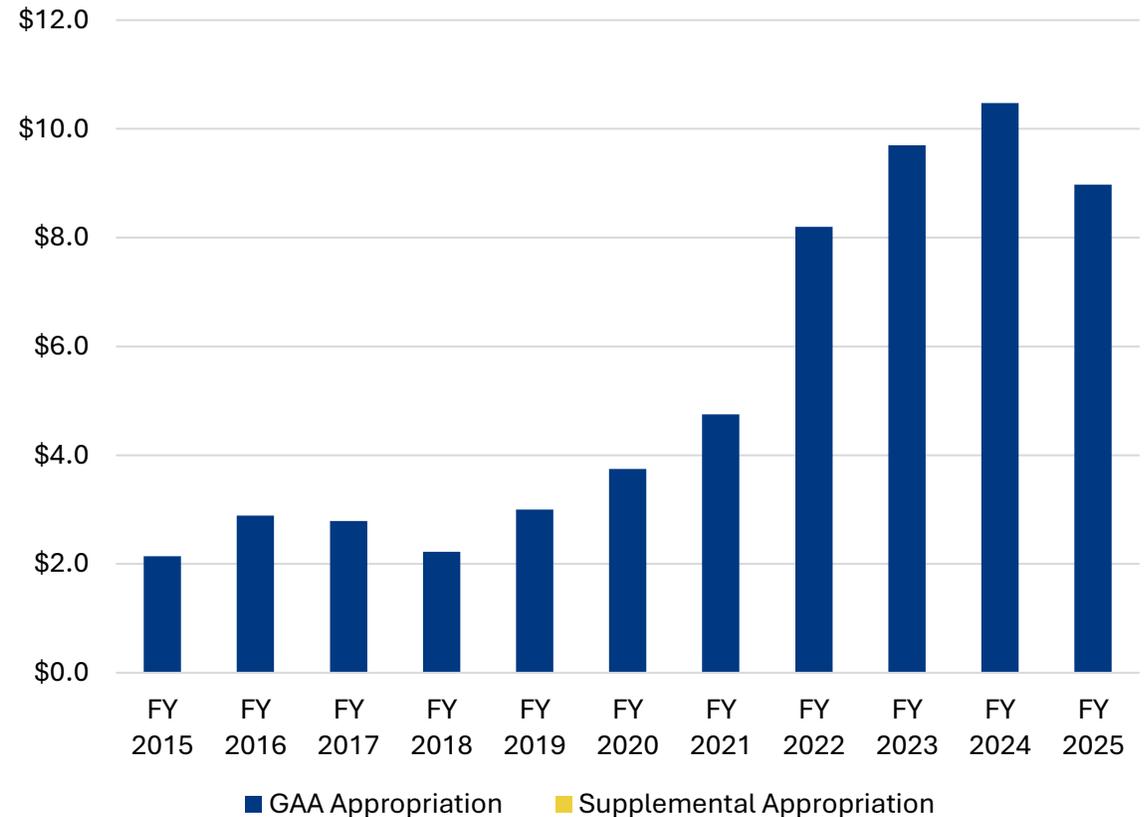
The largest increases in HCECs spending occurred during the pandemic:

- The allocation increased from \$4.78 million in FY 2021 to **\$8.20 million** in FY 2022.
- This increase was largely tied to the increased number of individuals and families accessing federal & state housing assistance programs (ERAP & RAFT). HCECs served between 7,000 - 11,000 households a month from September 2021 - October 2022.

In FY 2024, **75,427** consumers received services from HCECs.



*HCECs – 10 Year Funding History*



# Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)

The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) offers rental assistance in the form of vouchers to families with low incomes, including individuals, elderly persons, and individuals with disabilities.

Eligibility Guidelines	Homelessness Priority
<p>MRVP is open to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families with low incomes, including individuals, elderly persons, and individuals with disabilities.</li> <li>Households whose income is below 80% of Area Median Income (AMI).                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to 75% of vouchers are prioritized for households whose income is at or below 30% of the AMI at initial eligibility.</li> <li>82% of households in MRVP have incomes below 30% AMI.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Households that are eligible for <a href="#">homeless priority</a> may expedite the application process. The Centralized Screening Office verifies claims for housing priority.</p>
Types of Vouchers	Income Contributions & Other Requirements
<p>MRVP offers rental assistance in the form of two different vouchers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobile (tenant-based) vouchers can be used for any housing unit meeting state sanitary codes. The amount of a mobile voucher is limited based on the voucher size and zip code of the participant.</li> <li>Project-based vouchers are tied to specific units. The owner rents these units to the participant, and the participant receives voucher payments for as long as they continue to live in the unit.</li> </ul>	<p>Those receiving a voucher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will pay at least 30% of their net monthly income towards rent, and the state provides the remaining balances.</li> <li>Are subject to eligibility conditions, including social security number (if they have one) disclosure for income verification.</li> </ul>

# MRVP – Recent Funding History

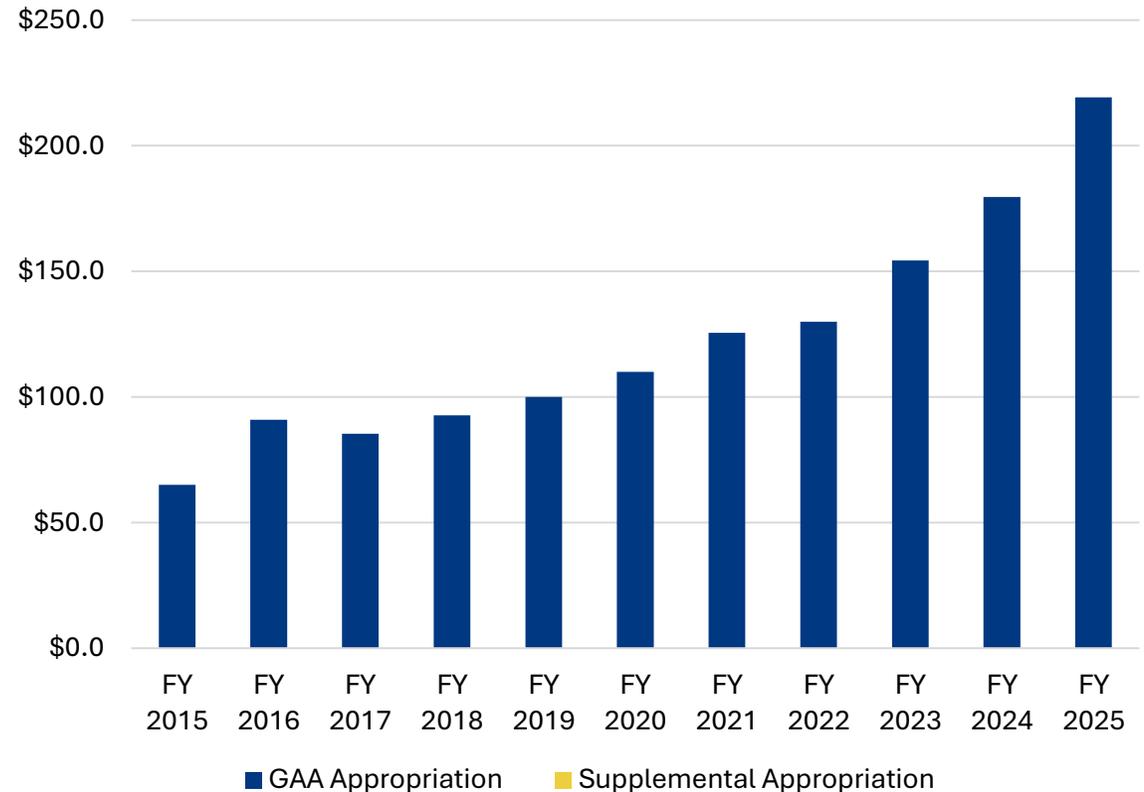
In the FY 2025 GAA, MRVP was funded at **\$219.24 million**, representing:

- **19%** of overall housing spending in the budget.
- **25.9%** of rental assistance program spending.
- From FY 2015 – FY 2025, funding increased by **\$154.24 million** (237%).

Larger annual funding increases for MRVP began in FY 2023. Over the same time period, the number of leased vouchers has not increased at the same rate. Funding growth has largely been in response to cost-of-living increases.

In FY 2024, **9,982 vouchers** were leased through MRVP. Based on available funding, the average yearly cost per voucher was **\$17,992** or approximately **\$1,499** per recipient each month.\*

**MRVP – 10 Year Funding History**



\*Assumes all funding supports direct assistance, related administrative costs, and a consistent per-voucher rate.

# Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP)

The Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP) provides rental assistance in the form of mobile (tenant-based) vouchers for 1-bedroom apartments to low-income individuals with disabilities under the age of 60. The AHVP program also offers project-based vouchers and is designed to help people with disabilities live independently.

Eligibility Guidelines	Homelessness Priority
<p>AHVP is open to those who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-income individuals with disabilities who are under the age of 60 at the time of initial eligibility. Individuals can keep their vouchers after they turn 60.</li> <li>• Have an income less than around 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI).</li> </ul>	<p>Households that are eligible for <a href="#">homeless priority</a> may expedite the application process. The Centralized Screening Office verifies claims for housing priority.</p>
Type of Voucher	Income Contributions & Other Requirements
<p>AHVP provides mobile (tenant-based) vouchers for 1-bedroom units, with amounts determined by the Department of Housing and Livable Communities based on factors such as household size, income, and geographic information. AHVP also offers project-based vouchers.</p>	<p>Participants will pay between 25%-30% of their net income towards rent, depending on whether utilities are included in their rental agreement. The local housing agency covers the remaining rent balance and pays it directly to the landlord.</p>

# AHVP – Recent Funding History

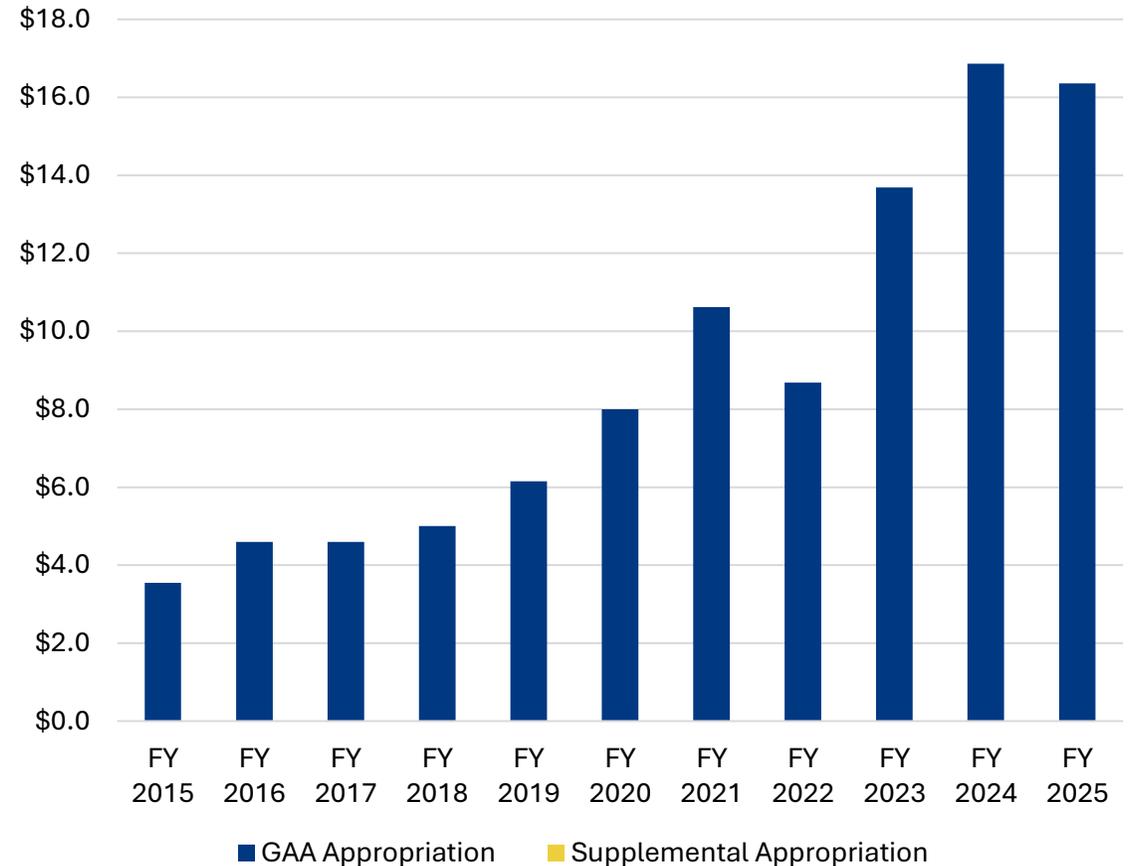
In the FY 2025 GAA, AHVP was funded at **\$16.36 million**, representing:

- **1.4%** of overall housing spending in the budget.
- **1.9%** of rental assistance program spending.
- From FY 2015 – FY 2025, funding increased by **\$12.81 million** (361%).

The largest increases in AHVP spending took place during the pandemic. Since FY 2022, the number of vouchers issued has increased by over 100.

In FY 2024, **741 vouchers** were leased through AHVP. Based on available funding, the average yearly cost per voucher was **\$22,757**, or approximately **\$1,896** per recipient each month.\*

**AHVP – 10 Year Funding History**



\*Assumes all funding supports direct assistance, related administrative costs, and a consistent per-voucher rate.

# DMH Rental Subsidy Program (DMHRSP)

The DMH Rental Subsidy Program (DMHRSP) helps address the housing needs of the Department of Mental Health (DMH) clients across Massachusetts. Jointly administered by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) and the DMH, this program provides rental subsidies to assist clients in securing stable housing.

Eligibility Guidelines	Voucher Types
<p>To be eligible, participants must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet the <a href="#">DHCD eligibility requirements</a> and receive services from the DMH.</li> <li>• Have an income that is 80% of the Area Median Income or less.</li> </ul>	<p>There are two types of vouchers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsor-based: A selected service provider is awarded a voucher and leases a unit directly from the property owner. The service provider then selects DMH clients to occupy the unit, ensuring they meet eligibility requirements and receive DMH services.</li> <li>• Tenant-based: clients with DMH case management services receive the voucher and enter into a lease directly with the property owner.</li> </ul>
Subsidy Amount	Program Administration
<p>Individuals receiving a rental subsidy voucher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay 30% of their adjusted income toward rent and the rental vouchers cover the balance.</li> <li>• Receive services through community providers to support their tenancy, health, and recovery.</li> </ul>	<p>DMHRSP is jointly administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Department of Mental Health (DMH).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DHCD establishes regulations and guidance for the administration of rental subsidy vouchers.</li> <li>• The DMH selects service providers and clients for program participation.</li> </ul>



# DMHRSP – Recent Funding History

In the FY 2025 GAA, DMHRSP was funded at **\$16.55 million**, representing:

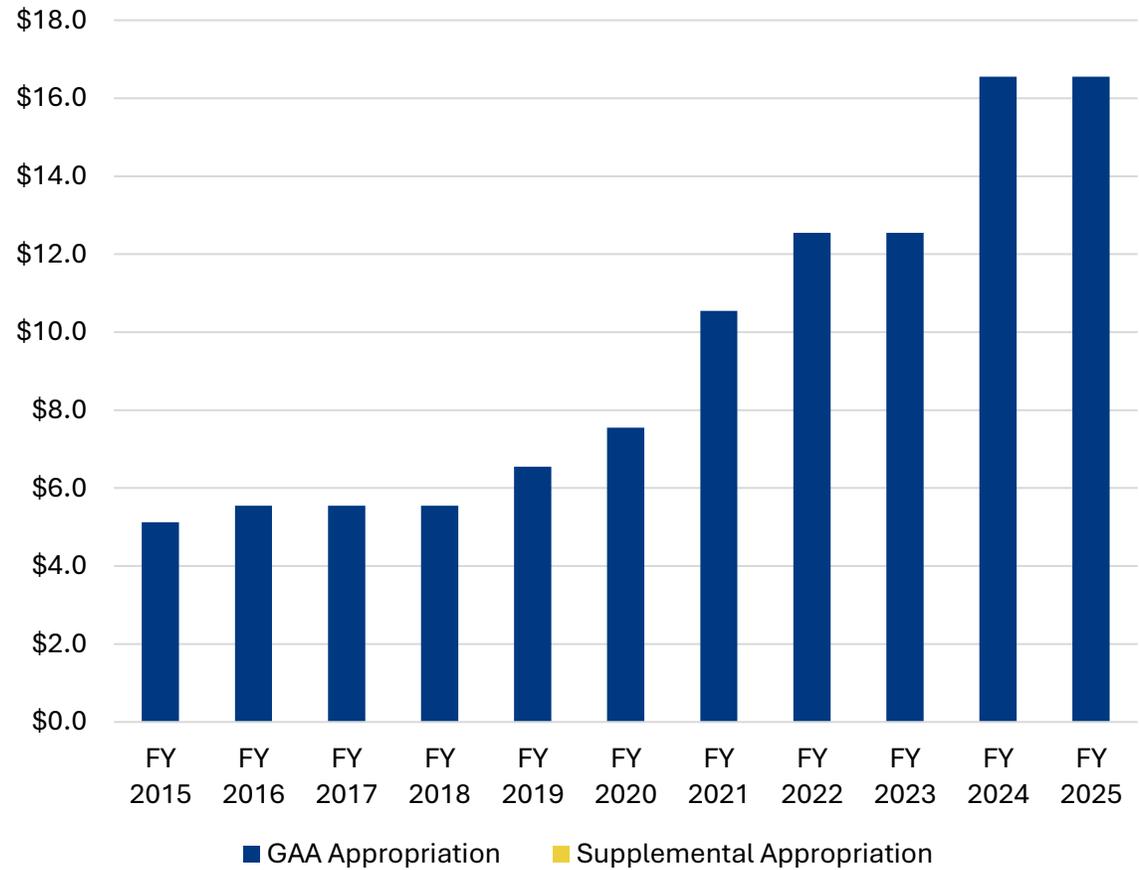
- **1.4%** of overall housing spending in the budget.
- **2%** of rental assistance program spending.
- From FY 2015 – FY 2025, funding increased by **\$11.4 million** (223%).

DMHRSP is funded by EOHLC’s line item and **additional funds from DMH’s budget line items**. The total funding for DMHRSP is **projected to be \$40.8 million** in FY 2025.

The program has grown year over year since before the COVID-19 pandemic, with overall spending exceeding appropriations and increasing annually. DMHRSP has been serving additional DMH clients month over month for many years.

In FY 2024, **2,387 vouchers** were leased, with an average yearly cost of **\$13,300** per voucher, or **\$1,108** per month.\*

**DMHRSP – 10 Year Funding History**  
(Under EOHLC’s Line-Item 7004-9033)



\*Assumes all funding supports direct assistance, related administrative costs, and a consistent per-voucher rate.

# Housing Assistance for Re-Entry Transition

The Housing Assistance for Re-Entry Transition program is a pilot initiative to provide housing support to individuals transitioning from incarceration (county correctional facility or state prison) back into communities and is a part of the Stable Start Program.

<b>Eligibility Guidelines</b>	<b>Program Goal</b>
To be eligible individuals must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Transitioning from incarceration (county correctional facility or state prison) back into the communities.</li><li>• Participating in re-entry programs funded through specific state programs (8000-0655 and 8900-1100).</li></ul>	The goal of this program is to promote stability and reduce recidivism by ensuring access to affordable housing for individuals re-entering society after incarceration.
<b>Subsidy Amount</b>	<b>Program Administration</b>
The specific rental subsidy amount is determined by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC).	The program offers rental subsidies to participants in the re-entry programs and is administered by the EOHLC in consultation with the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS).

# Housing Assistance for Re-Entry Transition – Recent Funding History

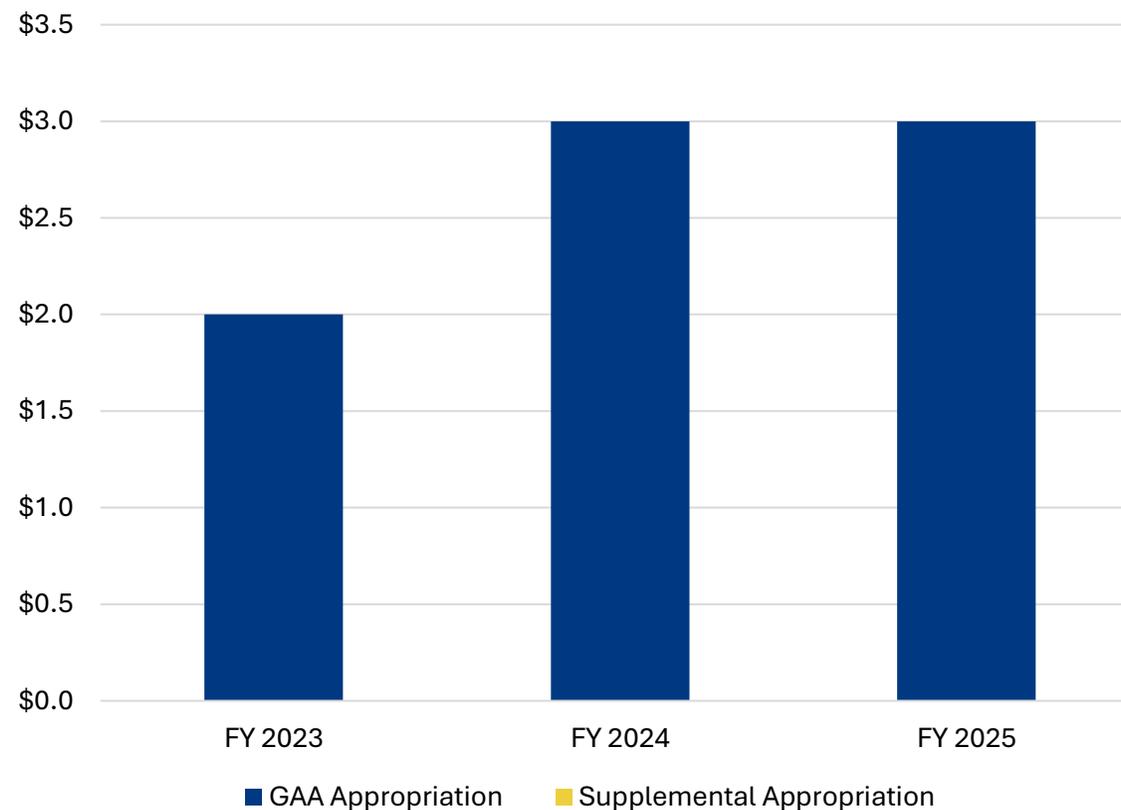
In the FY 2025 GAA, Housing Assistance for Re-Entry Transition was funded at **\$3.0 million**, representing:

- **0.3%** of overall housing spending in the budget.
- **0.4%** of rental assistance program spending.
- From FY 2015 – FY 2025, funding increased by **\$3 million** (100%).

House Assistance for Re-Entry Transition, introduced in the FY 2023 budget, is a part of the Stable Start program. The program provides 30 vouchers for older adults and additional services, including housing and support, for young adults and adults exiting corrections.

In FY 2025\*, 26 vouchers are expected to be leased, with an average yearly cost of **\$20,712** per voucher, or **\$1,726** per month.\*\*

**Housing Assistance for Re-Entry Transition – 3 Year Funding History**



\*Spending and utilization data unavailable for FY 2024.

\*\*Assumes all funding supports direct assistance, related administrative costs, and a consistent per-voucher rate.

# Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)

The Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) is a homelessness prevention program that supports households or individuals at risk of homelessness or losing their housing.

Eligibility Guidelines	Financial Assistance & Benefits	Eligible Uses of Assistance
<p>To be eligible for RAFT, households or individuals must meet one of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have an income less than 30% of Area Median Income (AMI) and be at risk of homelessness (eviction, behind on mortgage payments, or facing a utility shut-off).</li><li>• Have between 30%-50% of the AMI and be at risk of homelessness due to a significant reduction in income or increased expenses.</li><li>• Have an income of up to 60% of AMI and be at risk of injury or harm due to domestic violence in their current housing situation.</li></ul>	<p>Households or individuals eligible for RAFT may receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Up to \$7,000 per 12-month period. This allows families to stay in their current home or move to a new one.</li></ul>	<p>RAFT may be used for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rent arrears payments.</li><li>• Utility arrears payments.</li><li>• Mortgage arrears payments.</li><li>• Rental start-up and moving costs.</li></ul>

# RAFT – Recent Funding History

In the FY 2025 GAA, RAFT was funded at **\$197.41**

**million**, representing:

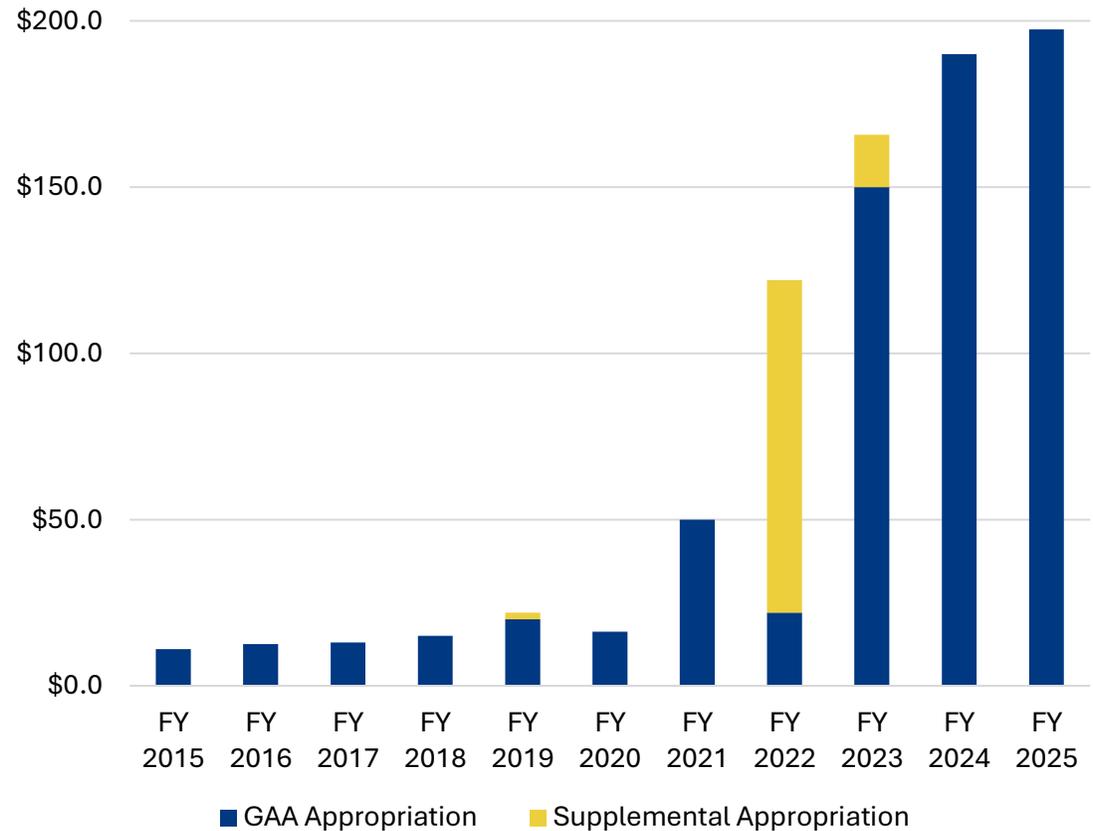
- **17.1%** of overall housing spending in the budget.
- **23.3%** of rental assistance program spending.
- From FY 2015 – FY 2025, funding increased by **\$186.4 million** (1695%).

Before the pandemic, RAFT was about a \$15 million program. During the pandemic (FY 2020 – FY 2021), many families received federal emergency rental assistance, reducing the need for RAFT. After federal funding ended, the state maintained higher funding levels for RAFT.

In FY 2022, the per-household maximum benefit was increased from \$4,000 to \$10,000. In FY 2025, the benefit was adjusted to \$7,000 over 12 months.

In FY 2024, **40,669** families received RAFT assistance. Based on available funding, the average annual cost per family was **\$4,672.\***

**RAFT – 10 Year Funding History**



\*Assumes all funding supports direct assistance and related administrative costs.

# Emergency Assistance Family Shelters and Services (EA Shelter)

The Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter program provides shelter and rehousing services to families with low incomes with children and pregnant individuals experiencing homelessness. The program’s goal is to stabilize families in emergency situations and help them transition to permanent housing.

Eligibility Guidelines	Type of Shelter Setting
<p>Families are eligible for EA shelter if they meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are Massachusetts residents.</li> <li>• Their gross income is 115% or less of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG). Families exceeding 200% of the federal poverty level may still retain eligibility for up to six months if they meet specific conditions.</li> <li>• They are pregnant or have children under 21.</li> <li>• They are facing an imminent risk of homelessness due to one of the following reasons:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No-fault fire, flood, natural disaster, condemnation, or foreclosure.</li> <li>• Fleeing domestic violence (current or within the past 12 months).</li> <li>• No-fault eviction.</li> <li>• Substantial health and safety risks to their children.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The program offers temporary shelter in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregate settings: Families have their own private place to sleep but share common spaces with other families.</li> <li>• Co-Shelter: Families have private bedrooms and share common spaces in apartments with other families.</li> <li>• Scattered-site: Families have private living spaces/apartments separate from other families.</li> <li>• Hotels/motels: Families have their own hotel rooms and have access to designated common spaces within the hotel.</li> </ul>
Two Track System and Length of Stay	Housing Search and Work Authorization Assistance
<p>There is a six-month limit on shelter stays, with possible extensions under certain circumstances. Families are assessed based on their risks and needs and directed to one of two tracks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid Shelter Track: Low-risk families who can quickly transition to permanent housing, with stays limited to 30 days.</li> <li>• Bridge Shelter Track: High-risk families with complex needs, with stays limited to up to six months.</li> </ul>	<p>Services include housing search, assistance, case management, and help with accessing other resources (employment programs, healthcare, childcare). Families receive assistance developing a rehousing plan within four weeks of entering the program.</p>

# EA Shelter – Recent Funding History

In the FY 2025 GAA, EA shelter was funded at **\$326.07 million**, representing:

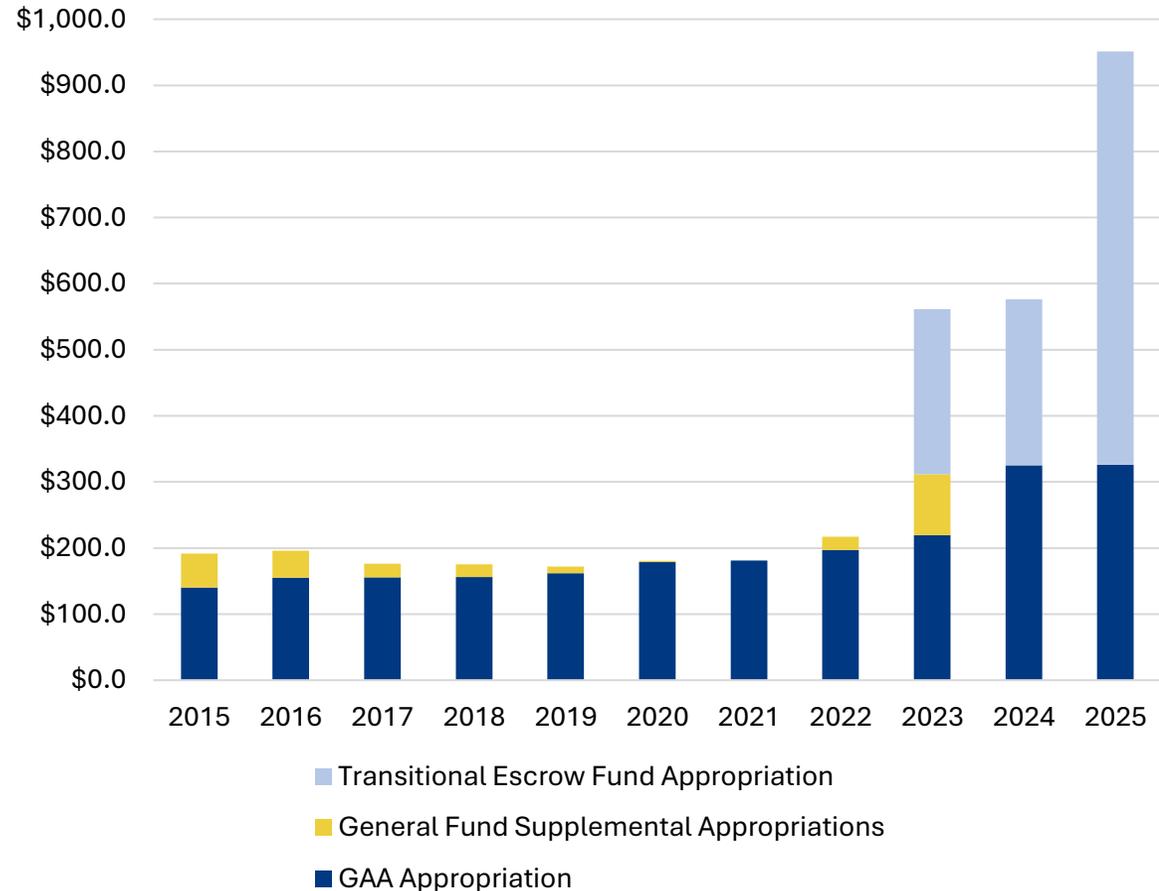
- **28.2%** of overall housing spending in the budget.
- **38.5%** of rental assistance program spending.
- From FY 2015 – FY 2025, funding increased by **\$185.8 million** (130%).

The **total costs of the EA program in FY 2025 are projected to be \$1.09 billion**. To date, \$625 million in supplemental funding has been made available.

The largest increases in EA shelter funding occurred in FY 2023, as the state responded to the rapid influx of immigrant families, in addition to the existing affordable housing shortage, which caused the system to grow beyond its capacity.

In FY 2024, an average of **7,144 families** were in the EA shelter system. Based on available funding, the average yearly cost per family was **\$119,916**, or **\$9,993** per family per month.\*

**EA shelter – 10 Year Funding History**



\*Assumes all funding supports direct assistance and is based on the FY 2024 EA total expenditure of \$856M.



# Trends in Housing Spending Pre- & Post-Pandemic

# Putting it All Together

Between FY 2020 - FY 2025, funding for rental assistance, emergency family shelter, and housing stabilization and support programs increased at faster rates than the prior five years. Multiple factors contributed to these increases, which can largely be grouped into three categories:

## Increased Demand

The pandemic heightened housing instability for families with low incomes and individuals due to **job losses, health crises, and evictions**, which increased the demand for rental assistance and shelter services.

## Increased Benefit Amounts

Massachusetts responded to the increasing housing demand by **increasing funding, broadening eligibility, and adjusting assistance models** across programs.

## External Factors

**Federal aid programs**, such as the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan Act, provided critical funding to expand state and local housing initiatives during the pandemic. The **migrant crisis** intensified the demand for emergency family shelter, which necessitated higher funding to accommodate the influx of new families requiring housing and support services.

# Spending Growth Over 10 Fiscal Years

*Including GAA, General Fund Supplemental, and Transitional Escrow Fund Appropriations*

Program	FY 2015	FY 2020	FY 2025	10 Year Nominal Growth Rate	10 Year % Growth
HomeBASE	\$28.96	\$27.85	\$57.32	\$28.37	98%
HCECs	\$2.14	\$3.75	\$8.97	\$6.83	319%
MRVP	\$65.00	\$110.00	\$219.24	\$154.24	237%
AHVP	\$3.55	\$8.00	\$16.36	\$12.81	361%
DMHRSP	\$5.13	\$7.55	\$16.55	\$11.42	223%
RAFT	\$11.00	\$16.27	\$197.41	\$186.41	1695%
EA Shelter	\$191.80	\$180.57	\$951.07	\$951.07	396%

Nominally, the three programs that experienced the largest spending growth in the last 10 fiscal years are **EA shelter, RAFT, and MRVP**.

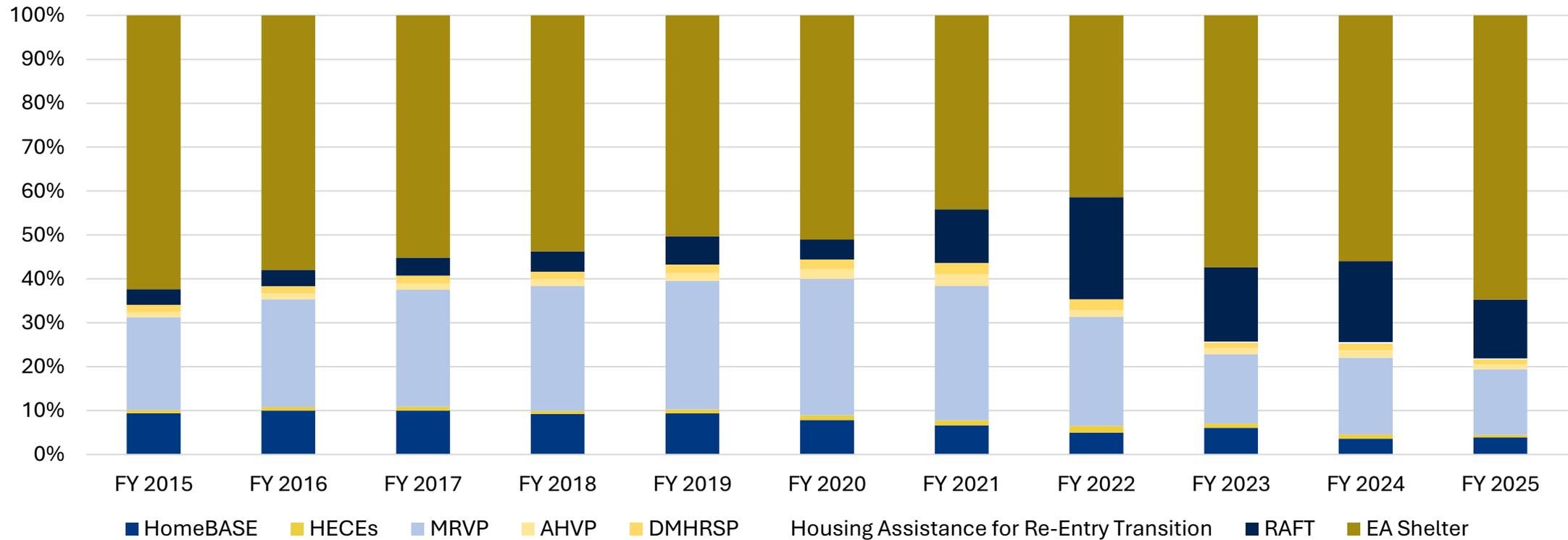
**RAFT** experienced the highest percentage growth at 1,695%, followed by **EA shelter** (396%) and **MRVP** (237%).

*The Housing Assistance for Re-Entry Transition program was introduced in FY 2023 and has been excluded from the chart for clarity.  
Spending for DMHRSP only reflects funding under EOHLC's line item.*



# Rental & Emergency Assistance Shelter Breakdown Over 10 Years

Proportionally, the share of spending dedicated to **RAFT** and **EA shelter** has also increased relative to the eight programs.

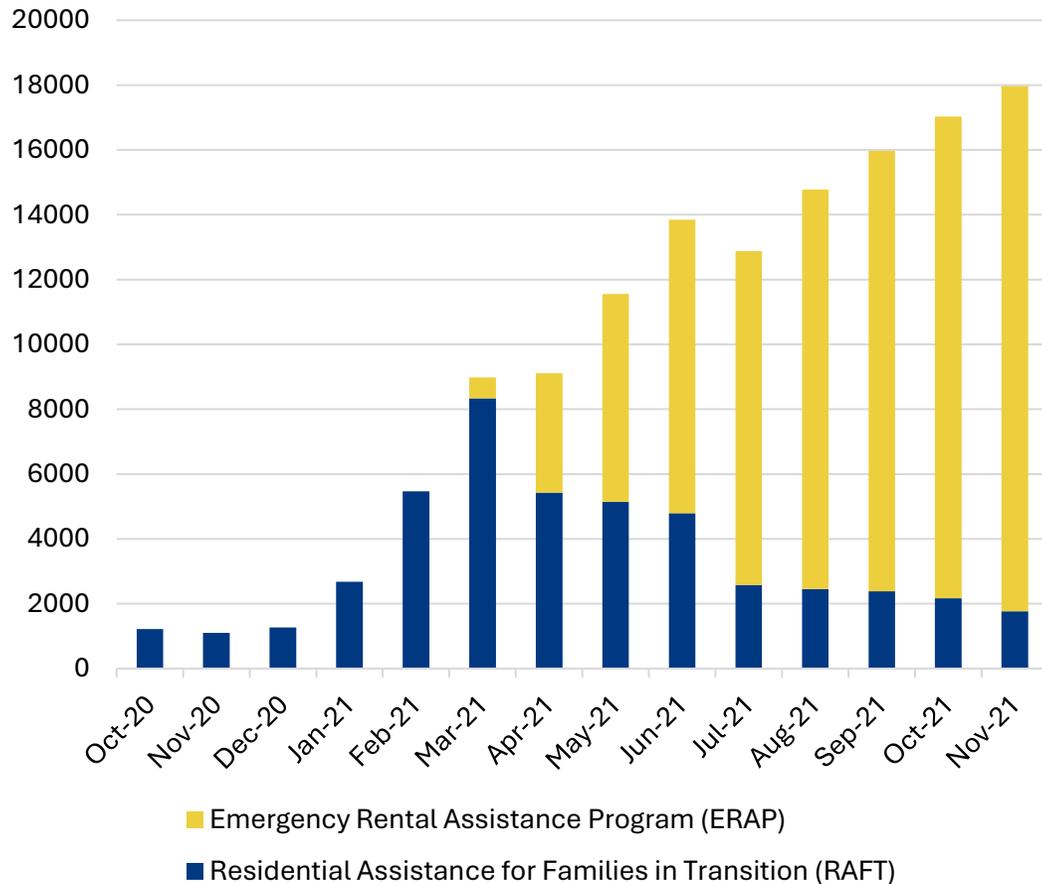


*Including GAA, General Fund Supplemental, and Transitional Escrow Fund Appropriations  
 Spending for DMHRSP only reflects funding under EOHLC's line item.*



# ERAP and RAFT During the Pandemic

Number of Families Served by ERAP & RAFT



Sources: [Federal Funds Office](#) and [Boston Indicators](#)

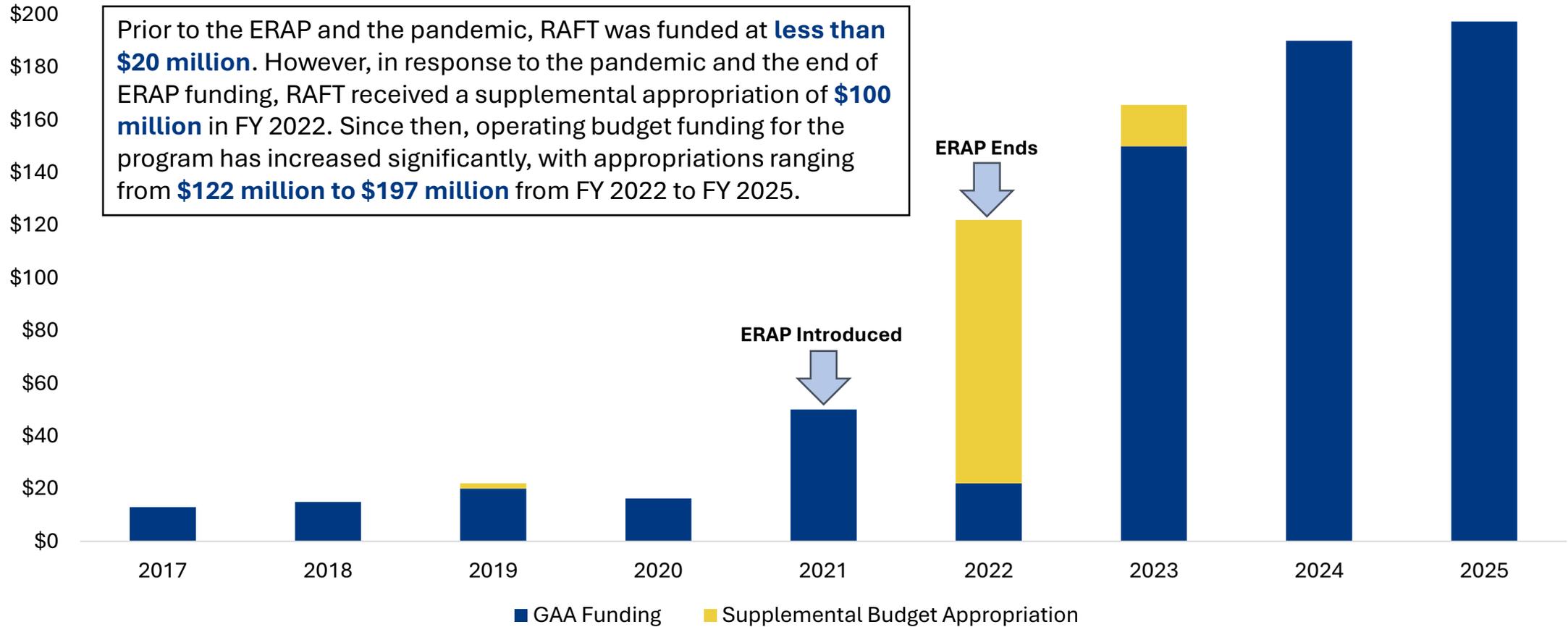
The **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)** was a federal initiative to help residents struggling to pay rent due to the financial impacts of the pandemic. ERAP benefits could be used to directly pay past due rent, utilities, and up to three months of future rent. Massachusetts received **\$853 million** in ERAP funding between March 2021 and July 2022.

ERAP worked alongside the **Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)** and Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance (ERMA).

Prior to the pandemic, RAFT was a primary source of emergency housing support for households, serving approximately 1,500 families. By March 2021, the program had grown to more than **8,000 households**.

Once ERAP was introduced, the number of households supported by RAFT decreased. By May 2021, ERAP was supporting more households than RAFT, due to the state's proactive efforts to direct applicants to ERAP to **maximize the use of federal funds** and its high eligibility cap (80 percent of Area Median Income).

# RAFT Funding Pre- and Post-ERAP





# Interaction of Programs

# System of Rental Assistance & Emergency Family Shelter

## Utilization & Cost Comparison of Rental Assistance Program & EA Shelter

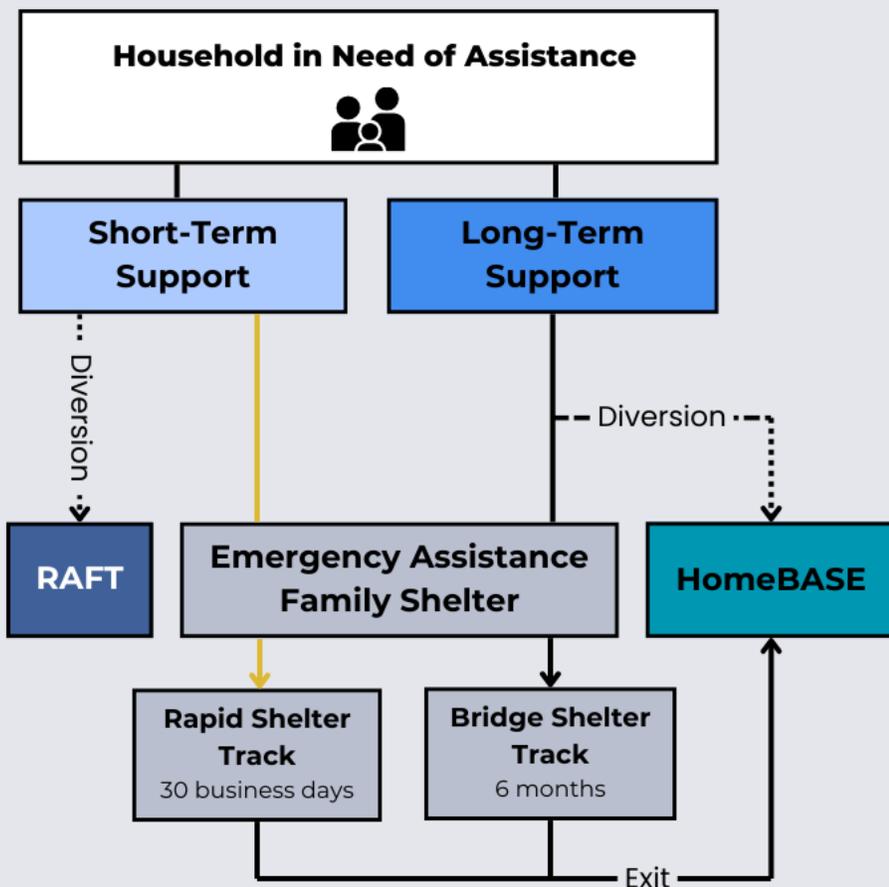
Type	Program	Participants/Vouchers	Yearly Cost	Monthly Cost
Rental Assistance Programs	MRVP	9,982	\$17,992	\$1,499
	AHVP	741	\$22,757	\$1,896
	Rental Subsidy Program for DMH Clients	2,387	\$13,300	\$1,108
	Housing Assistance for Re-Entry Transition*	26	\$20,712	\$1,726
Diversion or Exit Tool	HomeBASE	2,454	\$15,106	\$1,259
Prevention Tool	RAFT	40,669	\$4,672	
Shelter System	EA shelter	7,145	\$119,916	\$9,993

\*FY 2025 data as FY 2024 data for this program is unavailable.



# Support for Families and Renters Facing Housing Instability in Massachusetts

## Families Facing Homelessness



## Families and Individuals in Need of Rental Assistance

**MRVP**

- Rental assistance in the form of vouchers to families with low incomes, including individuals, elderly persons, and individuals with disabilities.
- Mobile (tenant-based) and project-based vouchers.
- Recipients pay at least 30% of their monthly income towards rent.

**AHVP**

- Rental assistance vouchers for low-income individuals with disabilities under 60 to help them live independently.
- Project-based and mobile (tenant-based) vouchers for 1-bedroom apartments.
- Recipients pay 25%-30% of their monthly income towards rent.

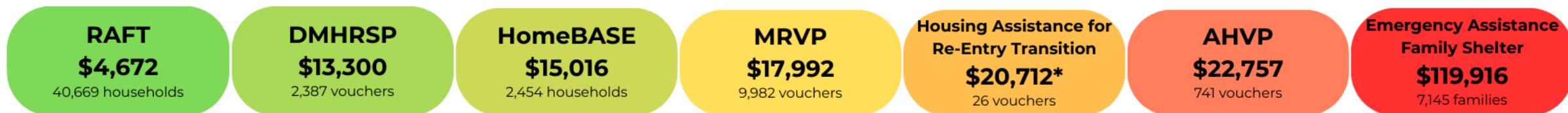
**RENTAL SUBSIDY PROGRAM FOR DMH CLIENTS (DMHRSP)**

- Rental assistance vouchers for individuals who receive services from the Department of Mental Health (DMH).
- Recipients pay 30% of their income toward rent.

**HOUSING ASSISTANCE FOR RE-ENTRY TRANSITION**

- Rental assistance vouchers for individuals transitioning from incarceration (county correctional facility or state prison) back into communities.
- The amount of the rental subsidies is determined by the EOHL.

## Yearly Cost Comparison in FY 2024



\*Based on FY 2025 data



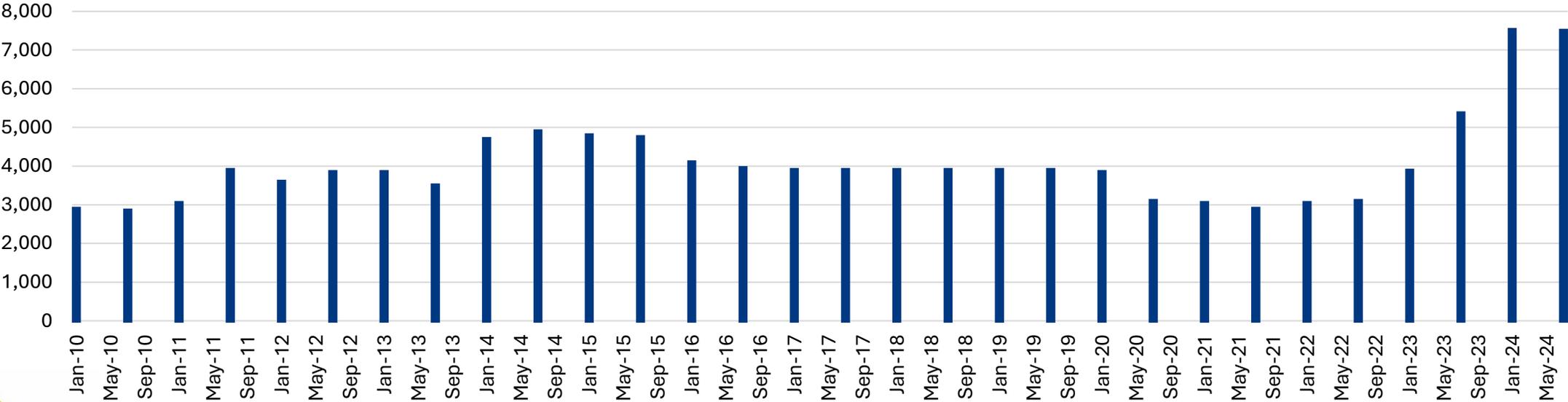
**Program Deep Dive:  
Emergency Assistance Family Shelter**

# EA Program: Brief History

The Emergency Assistance (EA) program provides temporary shelter and rehousing services to families with low incomes with children and pregnant individuals experiencing homelessness. The program’s goal is to stabilize families in emergency situations and help them transition to permanent housing.

Massachusetts’ EA program was created in 1983, and since its creation, shelter caseload has fluctuated based on external economic, immigration, and housing affordability factors. **Between 2010 – 2022, the historic average EA shelter caseload was 3,500 families.**

*Historical EA Caseload (2010 - 2024)*

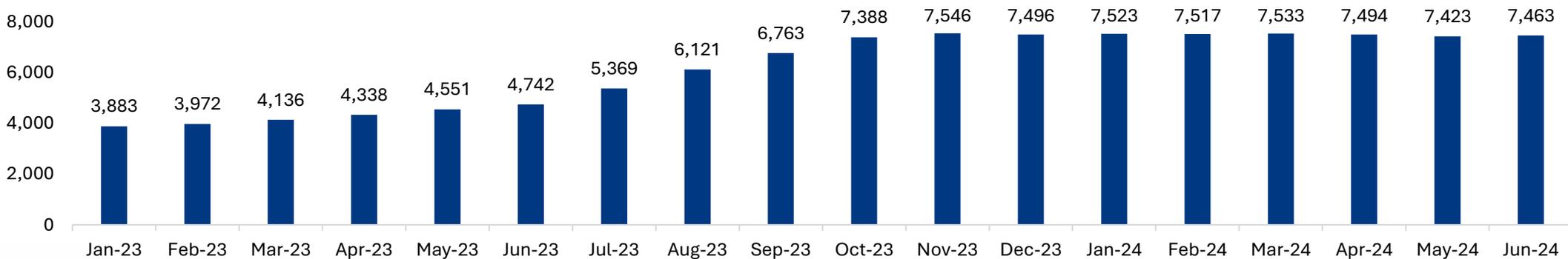


# EA Program: Caseload & Funding Trends

Beginning in 2022, the number of families eligible for and requesting EA shelter began to rapidly increase due to several factors, including an **influx of migrants** and the **end of COVID-era food and housing security programs**. At the same time, **low vacancy rates** and the **increasing costs of housing** made it more challenging for families to exit the shelter system.

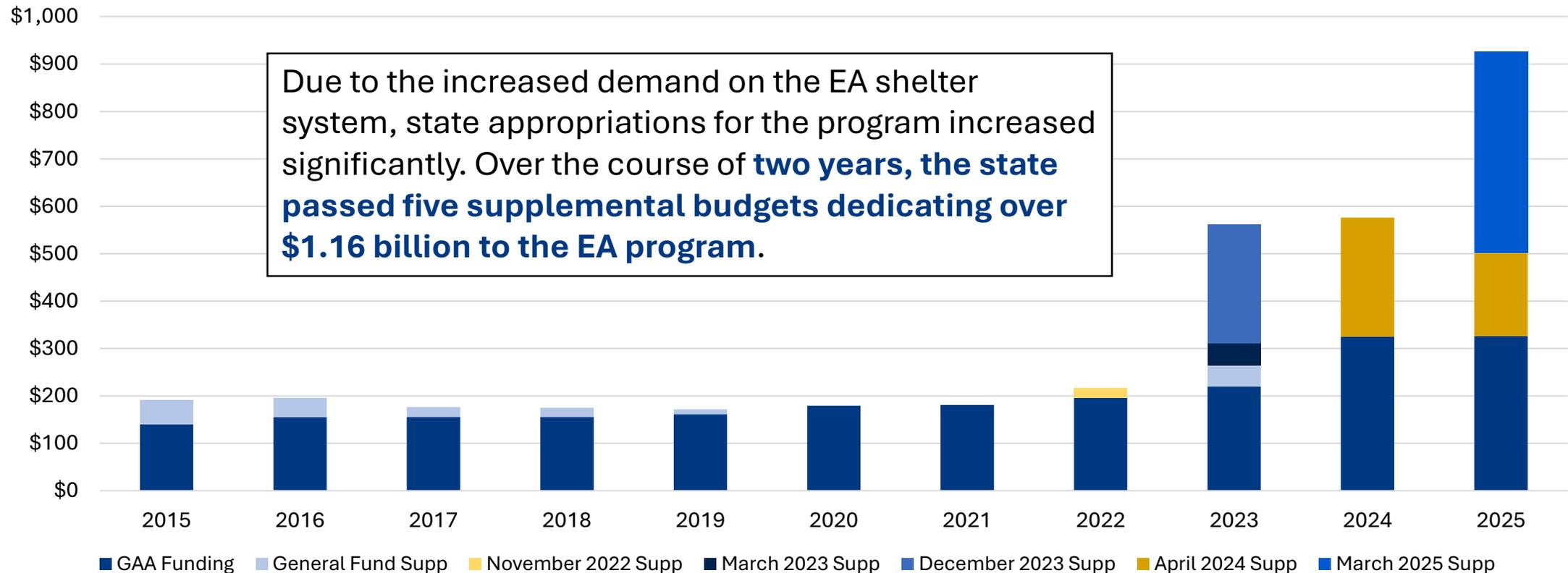


**EA Shelter Caseload Trends**



# Base & Supplemental EA Appropriations

*EA Funding & Supplemental Appropriations Timeline*



# Notable Policy Changes Due to Migrant Crisis

	Pre - 2023	Current Status
Length of Stay Policy	Families could remain in shelters without a specified time limit, allowing extended stays as needed.	There is a six-month limit on shelter stays, with possible extensions under certain circumstances. Families are assessed based on their risks and needs and directed to one of two tracks: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rapid Shelter Track: Low-risk families who can quickly transition to permanent housing, with stays limited to 30 days.</li> <li>2. Bridge Shelter Track: High-risk families with complex needs, with stays limited to up to six months.</li> </ol>
Shelter Capacity Cap	No formal cap on the number of families in the emergency shelter system.	4,000 family cap. Once this capacity is reached, new families are placed on a waitlist.
Use of Hotels and Motels	Hotels and motels have been used to emergently scale up the EA shelter system and provide short-term shelter when demand exceeds the supply of permanent shelter units. The previous peak usage of hotels and motels was 1,500 families.	Due to the extraordinary demand, EA shelter rapidly expanded into 4,000 units in hotels and motels. The Healey-Driscoll administration announced plans to phase out their use of hotels and motels over FY 2025 and FY 2026 and must submit a report to the Legislature about the progress in phasing these out by May 2025.

# Notable Policy Changes Due to Migrant Crisis Cont.

	Pre - 2023	Current Status
Presumptive Eligibility	Families can be placed in EA based on self-attestation of eligibility, without upfront documentation. Proof is required after placement, allowing families to receive temporary shelter benefits based solely on self-attestations.	Families must verify identity, Massachusetts residency, and other eligibility criteria prior to placement, with case-specific waivers available. Shelter is not provided to those unable to meet verification requirements.
Residency Requirement and Lawful Status	All household members must self-attest to Massachusetts residency, and one must prove U.S. citizenship, lawful permanent residency, or legal presence.	All household members must be Massachusetts residents, show intent to remain through acceptable verification and be U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, or legally present, with specific exceptions.
Criminal Convictions	Applicants must disclose criminal convictions related to recent evictions causing homelessness. Background checks are not addressed in the line item.	Adult applicants or beneficiaries must disclose all prior criminal convictions and pending serious charges on their initial or subsequent application. CORI checks are conducted for each adult prior to placement.

A nighttime photograph of a city skyline, likely Boston, with numerous skyscrapers and buildings illuminated. The lights reflect on the water in the foreground. A dark blue rectangular overlay is positioned at the bottom of the image, containing white text.

# **Emergency Assistance: FY 2024 Funding and Spending**

# Why Focus on FY 2024?

As demonstrated in the earlier section, significant amounts of supplemental funding have been appropriated for Emergency Assistance Family Shelter since FY 2023.

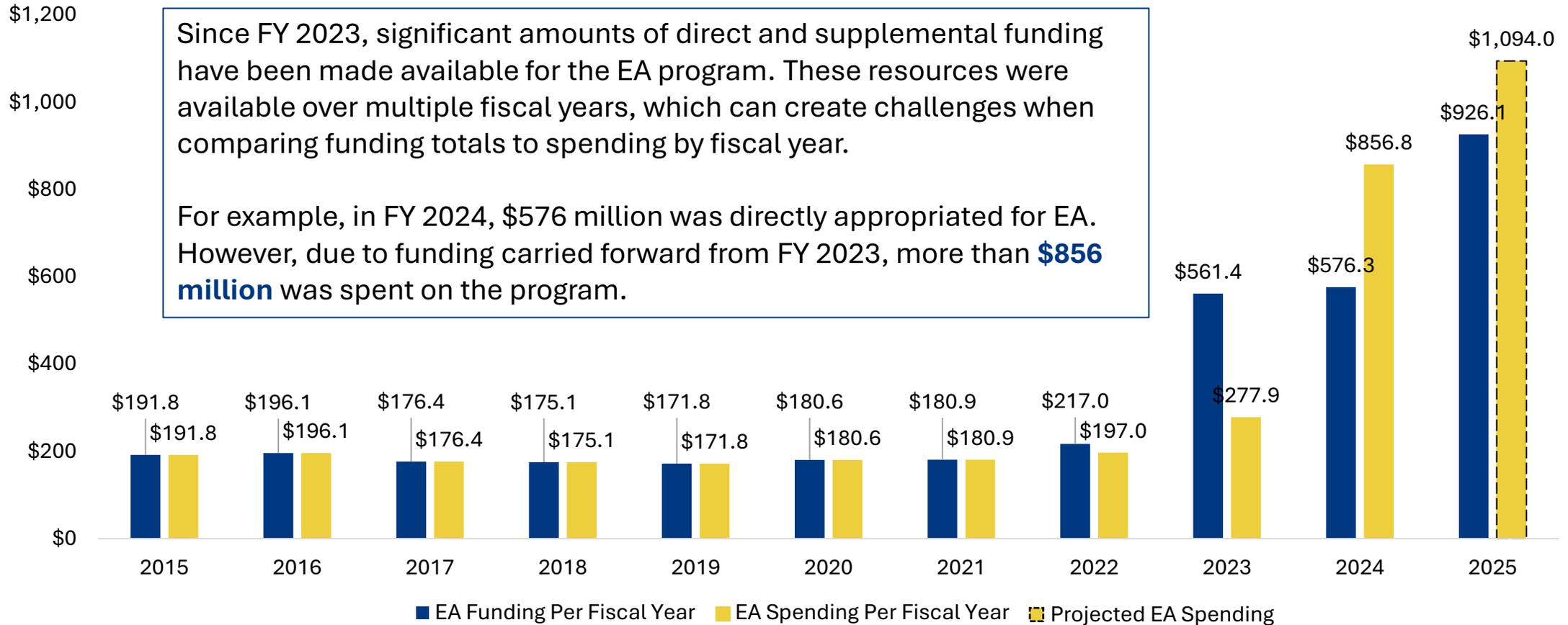
Supplemental appropriations have been made available over multiple fiscal years, which can create challenges for tracking the funding and spending levels for the EA program.

To provide the most complete assessment of the resources dedicated to the EA program, and how they have been spent, this section will focus specifically on FY 2024.

The analysis relies on data and information from several sources, including:

- **The Report of the Special Commission on Emergency Housing Assistance Program**
- **The Bi-Weekly Reports on the Emergency Housing Assistance Program**
- **CTHRU Data from the Office of the Comptroller**

# EA Funding v. Spending Per Fiscal Year



# FY 2024 Direct & Total Funding Overview

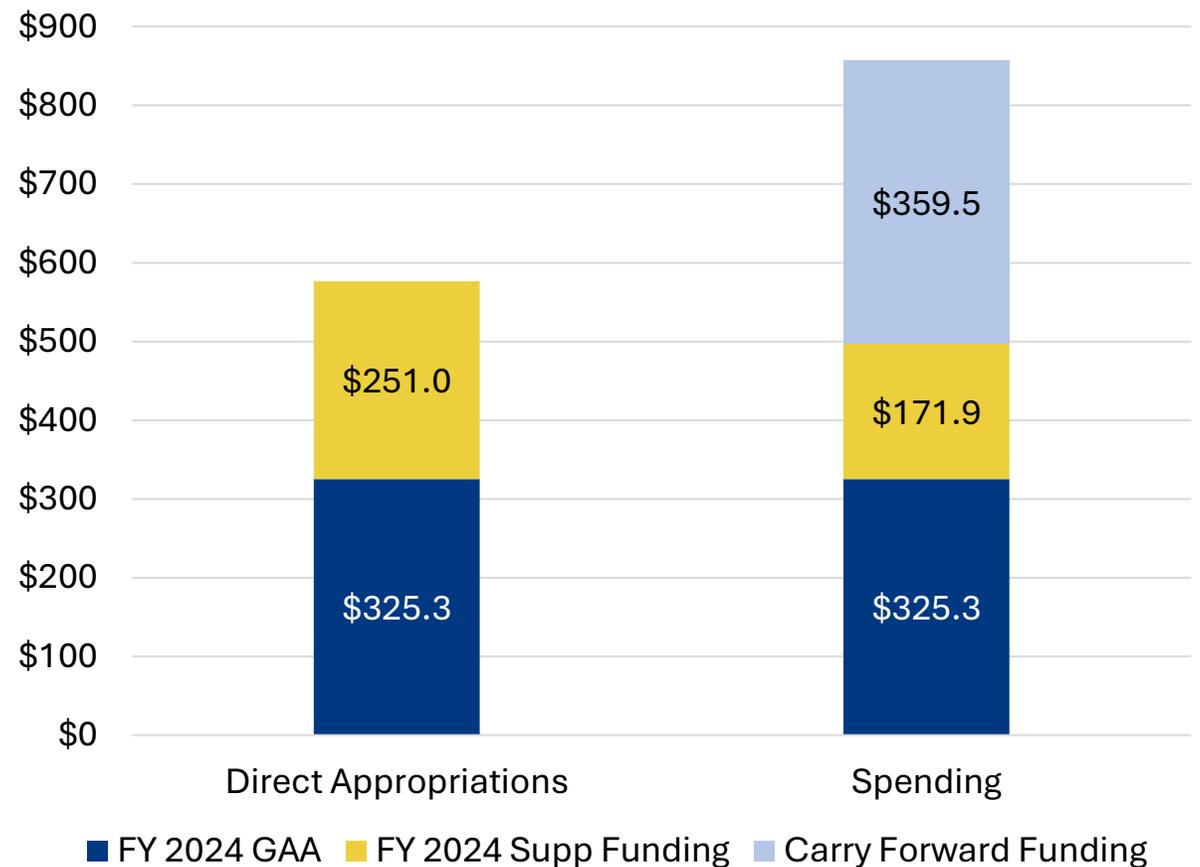
In FY 2024, the EA program received **\$576 million in direct appropriations** through two vehicles:

- FY 2024 State Budget: \$325M
- April 2024 Supp Budget: \$251M\*

In total, the EA program spent more than **\$856 million** in FY 2024. This was due to over \$359 million in funding carried forward from FY 2023, including:

- \$250M from the Transitional Escrow Fund.
- \$53M from supplemental budgets passed in November 2022, March 2023, and December 2023.
- \$56M in other carry-forward funding, possibly from additional transfers or other transactions.

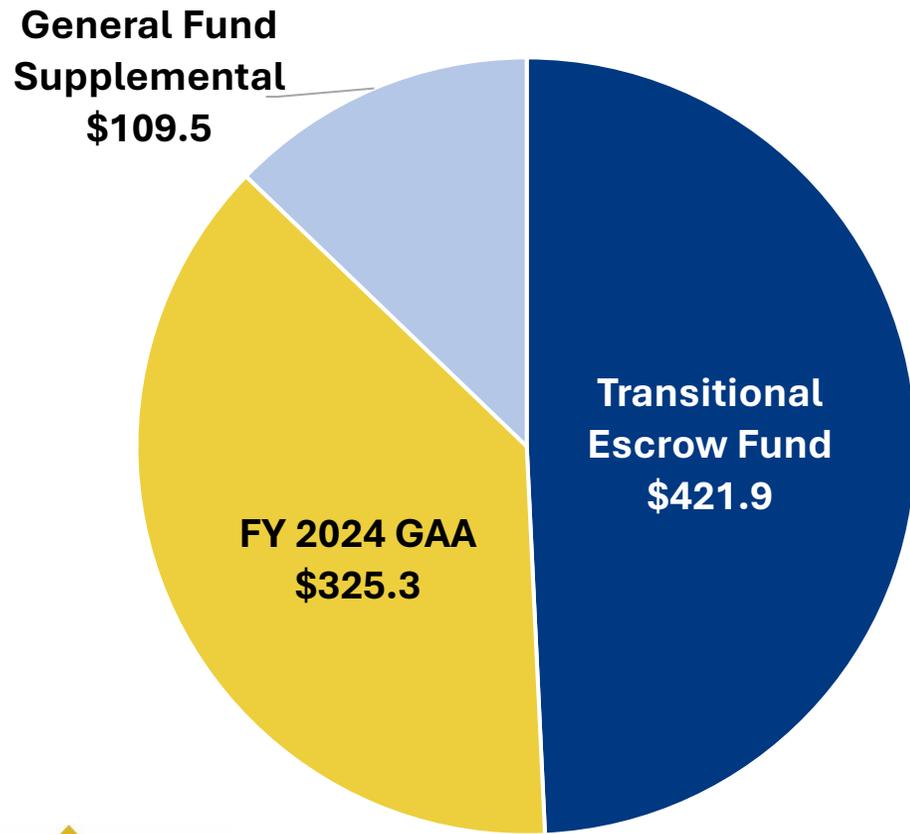
**FY 2024 Funding & Spending Overview**



\*\$80M from the April 2024 supplemental budget was carried forward into FY 2025.

# FY 2024 Funding Sources for EA

*Funding Sources for EA in FY 2024*



In FY 2024, funding for the EA program came from two primary sources:

- **General Fund - \$434.8 million**
  - *FY 2024 GAA – \$325.3 million*
  - *General Fund Supps - \$109.5 million*
- **Transitional Escrow Fund - \$421.9 million**

# FY 2024 Spending on EA – General Fund

General Funding Spending	MTF Estimated GF Spending	% of Spending
<b>FY 2024 GAA</b>	<b>\$325.25</b>	
Executive Office Of Housing And Livable Communities	\$325.25	74.82%
<b>Supplemental Spending</b>	<b>\$109.45</b>	
Department Of Public Health	\$6.22	1.43%
Emergency Management Agency	\$9.94	2.29%
Executive Office Of Health And Human Services	\$11.57	2.66%
Executive Office Of Labor And Workforce Development	\$0.07	0.02%
Military Division	\$21.25	4.89%
Office For Refugees And Immigrants	\$4.40	1.01%
Unknown – Other General Fund Spending	\$56.00	12.88%
<b>Total General Fund Spending</b>	<b>\$434.70</b>	



# FY 2024 Spending on EA – Transitional Escrow

EA Service & Supports	Transitional Escrow Fund	% of Spending
Shelter Providers Pay	\$298.30	70.7%
Emergency Per-Pupil Student Aid	\$43.00	10.2%
Clinical and Safety Risk Assessment and TRCs Service Provider Pay	\$31.30	7.4%
National Guard Payroll	\$9.70	2.3%
Life Safety Improvements at TRCs	\$3.80	0.9%
Educational Supports for Homeless Student Transportation & Mult-Lingual Faculty	\$3.00	0.7%
Municipal Reimbursements	\$2.00	0.5%
Community Health	\$0.74	0.2%
Immigrant Family Services Institute	\$0.52	0.1%
Regional Response Team Leads	\$0.36	0.1%
Neighborhood Villages Pilot Program	\$0.26	0.1%
Nursing Staff Supporting TRCs	\$0.09	0.0%
Unknown – Other TEF Spending	\$28.84	6.8%
<b>Total Transitional Escrow Fund Spending</b>	<b>\$421.91</b>	





# **Emergency Assistance: Trends and Challenges for FY 2026**

# FY 2025 Available Funding v. Projected Costs

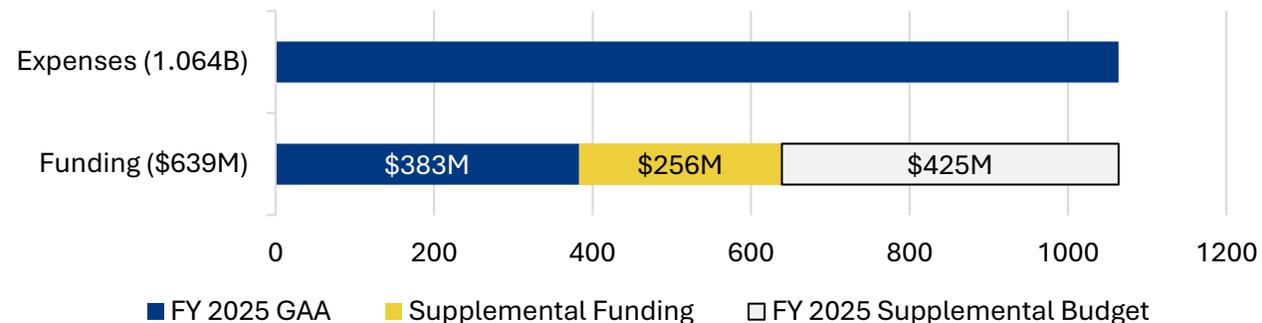
In January 2025:

- Approximately 5,800 families were currently in the system, which is 22% lower than peak levels in 2023 and 2024.
- Approximately 16 families per day sought shelter, compared to 40 per day in 2023 at the height of the crisis.
- 700 families exited to stable housing, the highest number in over a decade.

Despite the decreased number of families seeking shelter and increased exits, without further policy changes, projections showed 7,500 families in the system by 2026, with over 400 families on the waitlist and up to 400 new applicants monthly. **FY 2025 expenses were projected at \$1.094 billion.**

On February 28, 2025, the Governor signed a supplemental budget appropriating **\$425 million from the Transitional Escrow Fund** to support the remaining FY 2025 projected costs of EA shelter and help bring the system back to fiscal and operational sustainability. The supplemental budget also included **policy changes** related to length of stay, a formal shelter cap, criminal convictions, and more.

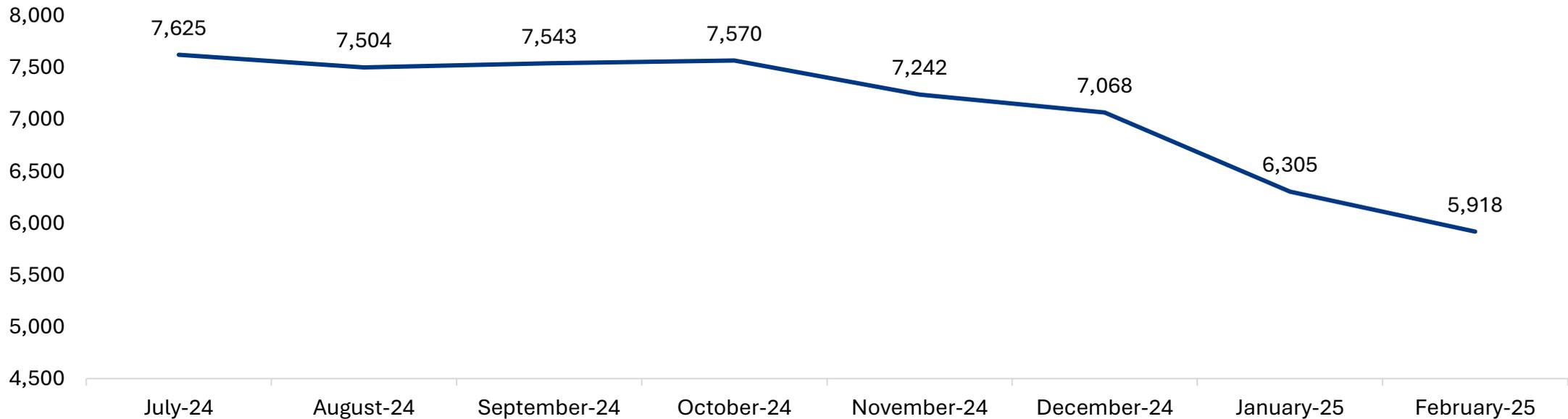
Since the start of FY 2025 and following subsequent policy changes within the supplemental budget, the shelter caseload has steadily trended downward to under 6,000 families as of February 2025.



# FY 2025 Changes in Caseload

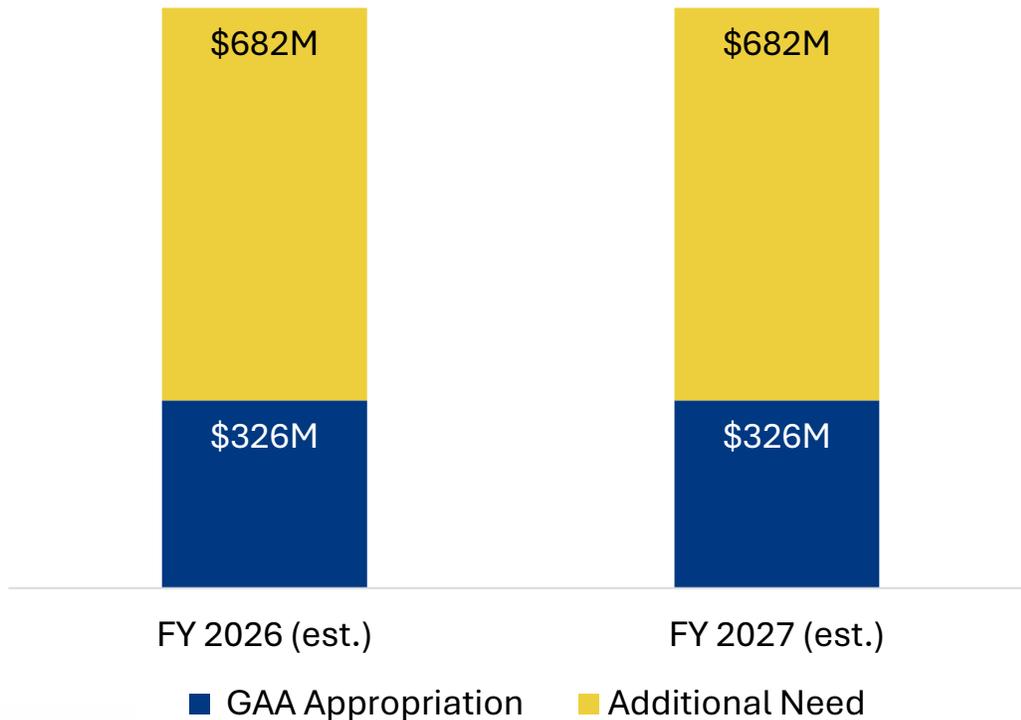
To date in FY 2025, the shelter caseload has steadily trended downward. Between July 2024 and February 2025, the number of cases has decreased from about 7,600 to **under 6,000** for the first time since July 2023, a 22% decrease over eight months.

*EA Shelter Caseload (Households) in FY 2025*



# Blueprint for Fiscal and Operational Sustainability

**Projected Deficiencies for FY 2026 & FY 2027,  
Prior to February 2025 Policy Changes**



Source: [Report of the Special Commission on Emergency Housing Assistance Program](#)

With the passage of the supplemental budget and accompanying policy changes, the Administration has taken steps to implement its **fiscal blueprint** for the remainder of FY 2025 and outlined a path toward fiscal and operational sustainability for FY 2026 and beyond. Its goal is to reduce caseloads to sustainable levels by FY 2026 and make shelter a **rare, brief, and non-recurring** experience for families transitioning to permanent housing.

In Governor Healey’s Fiscal Year 2026 Budget, proposed funding for HomeBASE remained level and EA shelter decreased by \$800k. Additionally, the Administration has indicated its intention to **request reserve funding for FY 2026**. The specific timing and structure of this request are currently unknown.

If successful, the Administration projects the system will return to baseline caseloads and costs, achieving operational and fiscal sustainability by the end of FY 2026.



# Looking Ahead: Future Questions for Consideration

# Future Questions for Consideration

1. As the number of families entering Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter continues to decrease and policy changes are implemented to limit the cost of the program, how can policymakers continue to support other housing stabilization and homelessness diversion programs to improve long-term outcomes?
2. What additional information is needed by policymakers and other stakeholders to better understand how Massachusetts could streamline and unify housing systems to improve efficiency and reduce associated costs?
3. Supportive housing provides stable, permanent housing for individuals with complex needs and services to promote housing stability and well-being. What lessons can be learned from supportive housing programs for individuals that can inform future housing investments for families?
4. How can Massachusetts improve the tracking and management of administrative costs to enhance the overall effectiveness of housing assistance programs?



# Appendix

# Supportive Housing in the AHA

The **Supportive Housing Pool Fund** was established in the AHA to support the production of permanent supportive housing for various vulnerable groups, including the chronically homeless, individuals with behavioral health or substance addiction needs, survivors of violence, and others at risk.

The fund receives money from various sources, including appropriations, grants, and private contributions. It provides **financial assistance** to projects and organizations offering stable housing and supportive services, such as **staffing, case management, and service coordination** for permanent supportive housing.

**Supporting housing** also appears in the AHA in the following ways:

- \$70 million loan program to develop community-based or supportive housing for individuals with mental illness and intellectual disabilities.
- \$55 million loan program to develop and redevelop community-based or supportive housing for persons with disabilities who are institutionalized or at risk of being institutionalized and are not eligible for housing under the aforementioned program.

# Supportive Housing in the GAA

The FY 2025 GAA funds SH through multiple housing line items and Department of Mental Health line items including:

- **Sponsor-Based Permanent Supportive Housing (7004-0105) (\$8.90 million)**
  - Focuses on providing permanent supportive housing units for individuals experiencing homelessness. This program aims to mitigate overcrowding in homeless shelters and sustain low-threshold sponsor-based leasing.
- **Home and Healthy for Good Program (7004-0104) (\$8.89 million)**
  - Operated by Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, Inc. Provides low-threshold permanent supportive housing for people experiencing chronic or long-term homelessness who have complex medical and behavioral health challenges.
- **Homeless Individuals Rapid Re-Housing Program (7004-0202) (\$5 million)**
  - Programs aimed at rapidly transitioning homeless individuals into sustainable permanent housing. These programs, administered by direct service providers, may include vocational training, temporary assistance, and permanent supportive housing.
- **Veterans' Outreach Centers Including Homeless Shelters (1410-0012)**
  - \$125,000 for women's supportive housing programs and services at the Montachusett Veterans' Outreach Center, Inc.
- **Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (4512-0200)**
  - \$10,000,000 to procure additional family supportive housing programs across the state.