

FOR RELEASE

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240,000 More Massachusetts Households Could Receive Affordable Housing with Expansion of Existing State Rental Assistance Program, Report Shows

December 14, 2022 — BOSTON — A new report from a partnership of housing groups finds that Massachusetts could provide affordable housing for 240,000 families by investing in a statewide expansion of the state’s housing voucher program. The report, entitled *A Right to Rental Assistance in Massachusetts*, estimates that making the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) available to all eligible households would cost \$3.2 billion annually. The report answers critical questions about how the expansion of MRVP might work, how many could benefit, what it would cost, and how we could meet the implementation challenges. The Boston Foundation, MetroHousing|Boston, Citizens’ Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), Regional Housing Network of Massachusetts (RHN), and the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials (MassNAHRO) funded and informed the report. The Center for State Policy Analysis at Tufts University provided technical support.

“That Massachusetts has a challenge meeting its affordable housing demand is beyond question,” said **Soni Gupta, associate vice president, neighborhoods and housing at the Boston Foundation**. “But this report lays out a practical case for meeting that demand using a system that has already served hundreds of thousands of Massachusetts families - if we have the fortitude to treat housing as the human right it is.”

While MRVP remains the largest state-funded voucher program in the country, it serves less than 10,000 households at its current budget — a small percentage of the 585,000 individuals and families estimated in the report to be eligible for state and federal housing assistance. The \$3.2 billion expansion of the program would reach an estimated 240,000 eligible for MRVP not already being served by other state and federal programs, taking into account that some households would not have eligible housing or opt not to apply for the program at any given

time. The investment, while significant, compares favorably to other core priorities, such as universal preschool.

“The current mix of systems falls far short of what is needed to make affordable housing available to all people in Massachusetts,” noted **Chris Norris, executive director of Metro Housing|Boston**. “But research and experience show that filling that gap and creating a more cohesive system would reduce poverty and homelessness, improve children's health and education outcomes, and create needed stability in the housing market, with the greatest impact on those with the lowest incomes.”

Key Findings

The report found that expanding MRVP to all that were eligible would:

- Bring the benefits of MRVP to a broader population of seniors, families, and other individuals with very low incomes, reducing poverty and homelessness while also increasing housing stability and family mobility.
- Eliminate the distortions and deep unfairness that come with the current lottery and waitlist approach.
- Reduce property owner discrimination against voucher holders since landlords who turn away eligible families would find themselves cut off from a huge new market.
- Create new incentives to construct housing for voucher-holders with the assurance of a guaranteed government payment for all units.
- Further racial equity in housing, as nearly half of Black families and 56 percent of Latino families would be eligible versus less than one in five White families.
- Potentially save the state money in other areas, including homelessness assistance and emergency housing, which typically cost the state \$300–\$400 million per year.

"After these two strenuous years and counting, many of us are still struggling to stay afloat amidst the impacts of the pandemic," said **Reverend Myrlande DesRosiers, director of the Everett Haitian Community Center**, an organization with extensive experience providing emergency housing support to people, especially immigrants, in the metro north region. "Adequate housing is essential for socioeconomic development and success. Providing rental vouchers will open a clear path to stable housing for all."

The MRVP expansion would require a phased approach to allow new administrative methods to take root, adjustments based on data and best practices, and an integrated statewide approach to

oversight and management. It would also likely need codification in the state's general laws to reduce the year-to-year uncertainty of funding.

“To bring rents in newly developed buildings to levels that people with low incomes can afford, rental assistance is vital in bridging the gap. In the open market, rental assistance helps make more homes affordable too. It's an economical and social imperative when housing costs far outpace wages and there's an affordable housing shortage,” said **Rachel Heller, chief executive officer of CHAPA**. “Now is the time to build upon the Legislature's investments in MRVP so that everyone can get the rental assistance they need.”

Today's report release also serves as the initial launch of a campaign to bring universal rental assistance to Massachusetts. The campaign seeks to bring together housing, business, and other groups interested in strong and stable affordable housing programs to educate and inform policymakers and other leaders about this opportunity.

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Founded in 1915, [the Boston Foundation](#) is one of the most influential community foundations in the country. Partnering with community members, donors, the public sector, businesses and nonprofits, we aim to repair past harms and build a more equitable future for our city and region. Supported by the Annual Campaign for Civic Leadership, we publish research into current critical issues, convene people in public forums to discuss the city's agenda and the region's trends—and use our shared knowledge to advocate for public policies that promote equity and opportunity for everyone. TBF is also one of New England's largest grantmakers, supporting nonprofits in Greater Boston through our endowment and working closely with our donors to support nonprofits locally, nationally and internationally.

***Citizens' Housing & Planning Association (CHAPA)** is Massachusetts's leading statewide affordable housing policy organization. Established in 1967, CHAPA advocates for increased opportunity and expanded access to housing so every person in Massachusetts can have a safe, healthy, and affordable place to call home in their chosen communities. For more information, visit www.chapa.org.*

*Serving more than 25,000 households annually, **Metro Housing|Boston** is dedicated to mobilizing wide-ranging resources to provide innovative and personalized services that assist families in avoiding homelessness, maintain housing stability, and achieve economic security. With more than 30 years' experience piloting and implementing housing programs, it has solidified their position as an industry-leading expert on navigating the affordable housing field. Metro Housing|Boston is committed to making sure that every person in Greater Boston will always have a place to call home. Visit www.metrohousingboston.org,*

*The **Regional Housing Network of Massachusetts (RHN)** is a non-profit organization whose members deliver progressive, affordable housing solutions and education to families and individuals in every community in the Commonwealth. We partner with clients, landlords, elected officials, cabinet agencies, other funders, as well as advocacy organizations and legal services. RHN successfully advocates and serves its clients – often among the most vulnerable in the Commonwealth – by stabilizing households, ensuring that landlords are paid, tenancies are preserved, and that utility arrearages are cured, which*

leads to healthy, vibrant communities across all regions of Massachusetts. Visit <https://www.masshousinginfo.org/regional-housing-network-massachusetts> for more information.

The Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials (MassNAHRO) connects public housing agencies of all sizes, state and federal, to resources to achieve professional success through collaboration, education, and advocacy. MassNAHRO represents and advocates on behalf of the 242 local housing authorities in the Commonwealth that own and operate 43,000 units of state-subsidized housing that serve more than 70,000 low-income veterans, seniors, families, and people with disabilities. For more, visit massnahro.org.