



national policy and advocacy council on homelessness

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NPACH Opposes Punitive Massachusetts Shelter Policies

February 18, 2009 – NPACH Executive Director Jeremy Rosen today criticized the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for issuing new shelter regulations that will result in increased family homelessness. Rosen made his comments in response to yesterday’s report that the administration of Governor Deval Patrick has proposed new rules that would deny shelter to homeless families who cannot meet a 30 hour per week work requirement or save 30% of their income.

In response to the new proposal, Rosen stated “In a time of crisis, when the economic recession and the foreclosure crisis are causing dramatic increases in family homelessness, government agencies cannot look to punish homeless families with children under the guise of ‘transforming’ the homeless services system. These proposals from the Department of Transitional Assistance appear to be nothing more than a callous attempt to leave more homeless families sleeping on couches, in their cars, or even on the streets - just to cut the state budget. In a time of rising unemployment, what other reason can there be for the Commonwealth to propose a new work requirement for already struggling homeless adults, and punish young children if their parents are unable to comply despite diligent efforts?”

Rosen went on to urge more pro-active solutions to family homelessness, noting “The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is admitting that these new policies could put more homeless families on the streets. Instead, we urge more thoughtful solutions, including the use of new funds from the economic recovery package signed this week by President Obama. This new money could provide short and medium term housing assistance for homeless families. In addition, the recovery package provides grants to rehabilitate foreclosed properties in blighted communities – these homes could be provided to homeless families. With new resources on the horizon, this is not a time to adopt counter-productive policies. We look forward to working with the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless and other key partners to ensure that these new regulations are rescinded in favor of more appropriate alternatives.”

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