

May 4, 2012

By Hand Delivery

The Honorable Therese Murray
Senate President
The State House
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Stephen Brewer
Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
The State House
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Proposals to Restrict Access to Emergency Shelter for Children and Families

Dear Senate President Murray and Chairman Brewer:

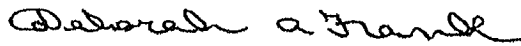
We write as members of the medical profession who specialize in child health and development issues to ask that you please not include in the Senate budget proposal for FY 13 any new restrictions on access to emergency shelter for children and families experiencing homelessness.

While we enthusiastically support increased resources for housing vouchers and homelessness prevention, we are very concerned about the proposals by the Governor and the House to deny access to shelter – or end access to shelter after a set period of time – to more homeless families. The adverse impacts of these proposals on child development and health – and the resulting medical, human, and fiscal costs to the families and the Commonwealth – will be pervasive and are extremely worrisome. The proposals do not even provide eligibility to shelter for families with pregnant women, newborns, chronically ill children, or young mothers.

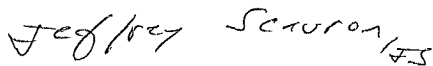
Children's Health Watch and other research groups have extensive medical data showing that young children in Boston area shelters are children with especially fragile health and at risk development and children born to homeless women are more likely to be low birth weight. This is a population that is even more than other children vulnerable to catastrophic outcomes of heat and cold stress and filthy and crowded living conditions. We dread an increase in child deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning and heat stroke when families are forced to live in cars.

We urge the Senate to retain the current emergency shelter safety net while increasing housing resources. Please do not allow the Commonwealth to turn its back on our most vulnerable children and families.

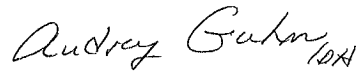
Sincerely,



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