



May 20, 2024

Dear Senator,

The Children's League of Massachusetts is a statewide, non-profit organization of 58 members, comprised of children and family services providers and advocates who bring deep human services expertise and leadership to our recommendations on how to best support children and families across the Commonwealth. In your FY2025 state budget, please prioritize critical funding for children, families, and their human services providers, as outlined below.

We appreciate that the Senate Ways and Means (SWM) Budget invests in our communities, residents, and essential front-line workers. Thank you to the SWM Committee for including \$33.8M in funding to Family Resource Centers (4800-0200), over \$1.5 billion to support accessible and affordable early education and care for working families, and holding steady on many solid investments made by the Governor and House of Representatives.

Please maintain the progress and bolster this judicious budget in just a few critical ways:

- Adopt Amendment #540 (Senator Kennedy) - **To address the high concentration of "high acuity" adolescents residing in Congregate Care** (4800-0041), add assurance and guidance on the implementation of a pilot program.
- Adopt Amendment #544 (Senator Kennedy) - **DCF Behavioral Health and Primary Care Loan Forgiveness Distribution Programs**: ensuring clinicians employed by DCF contracted congregate care and community-based services can apply for and receive MA Repay behavioral health and primary care loan repayment benefits, as long as 1) those clinician types align with the intent of the specific MA Repay program, and 2) inclusion of these clinicians comply with all relevant federal or state laws, rules, regulations, or approvals.
- **Maintain Services for Children & Families** (4800-0038) at the funding listed in each of the prior FY25 Budget recommendations.
- Adopt Amendment #578 (Senator DiDomenico) to **Lift Kids Out Of Deep Poverty**: move up the effective date of the 10% increase to Temporary Assistance for Families with Dependent Children (4403-2000) and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (4408-1000) from April 2025 to October 2024.
- Due to the housing crisis hitting transition age youth especially hard, provide **\$15M to Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Services** (4000-0007) (not the current \$11M which is less than last year) and not less

than **\$100,000 for BAY-CASH** to provide direct cash assistance to unaccompanied homeless youth.

- Adopt Amendment #1058 to amend line item 7008-1116 to provide not less than \$50,000 to Rise Above Foundation to build a **playground at DCF's Leominster Area Office**.
- To aid both the migrant crisis and the housing crisis, enhance funding to **Emergency Assistance for Family Shelters and Services** (7004-0101).

Additional Budget Priorities

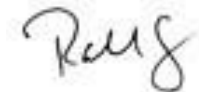
- **Human Services Critical Workforce**
 - \$390M for Chapter 257 of the Acts of 2008 (line item 1599-6903), understanding the fiscal realities of this budget cycle, CLM supports maintaining the Governor's proposal to fund critical rate adjustments.
- **Child and Family Welfare and Well Being**
 - \$139.5M for **Family Support and Stabilization** (line item 4800-0040) to support delivery of high-quality, evidence-based preventative services, including significant new, evidence-based services expected in an RFR to be implemented in FY25. These programs pay dividends for the state by effectively reducing child abuse and neglect cases, allowing children to stay safely in their homes, and reducing trauma for children and families.
 - \$10M to develop new **intensive residential program models** for youth with complex needs not currently being met.
 - \$2.1M to support increased demand in the **Massachusetts Youth Diversion program** (line item 4200-0700) and serve three additional counties.
 - \$11.4M to the **Department of Children and Families Local and Regional Management of Services** (line item 4800-0030) to meet the needs of children and families and uphold the system. Lead Agencies serve as DCF's local partners to assist youth and families to navigate the complexities of the child welfare system, coordinate with families and DCF social workers to facilitate Family Team Meetings, arrange for and monitor services, advocate for enhanced interagency collaboration, and provide resources to remove barriers to successful implementation of treatment plans.
 - \$3.1M in a new **Postpartum Care Services** program within DCF, serving families impacted by substance use disorders.
 - \$492.2M to **Special Education Circuit Breaker** (line item 7061-0012) combined with prior \$75M supplemental funding meets projected claims for extraordinary costs for out of district placements.
- **Behavioral Health**

- \$10M increase to DMH's **children and adolescent mental health services** (line item 5042-5000)
- \$3.6M to support DPH's **school-based behavioral health programming**
- \$5M for **early childhood mental health supports and services** (line item 3000-6075)

- **Childcare and Early Education**
 - Building up the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) **Pre-K Initiative** (line item 1596-2412) with a \$21M investment up from \$5.5M to expand universal access to high-quality preschool
 - Creating a **Childcare Affordability Initiative** (line item 1596-2435) receiving a \$75M investment to serve an additional 4,000 children
 - \$150M for **Child Care Grants to Providers**
 - \$65M for **Early Education and Care** (line item 1596-2434) financial assistance rate increases

With these critical needs in mind, the Children's League respectfully asks the Legislature to ensure we are making the best possible investments in human services to improve outcomes for children and families across the continuum of care. Vulnerable children and families and the providers that serve them across the Commonwealth rely on these critical investments that pay dividends in preventing child abuse and neglect, keeping families together, and ensuring all Massachusetts children have the opportunity to be safe, healthy, and thriving. We are responsible for the future outcomes of all children, and we cannot let them down.

Sincerely,



Rachel Gwaltney, Executive Director
Children's League of Massachusetts

Endorsing Members of the Children's League:

Brandon Residential Treatment Center, Inc.
Bridges Homeward
Center for Human Development (CHD)
Child & Family Services
Communities for People (CFP)
Cotting School
Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health MA
Fall River Deaconess Home
Family Continuity
Family Nurturing Center of Massachusetts, Inc.
Friends of Children
Gándara Center



CHILDREN'S
LEAGUE
OF MASSACHUSETTS

PROMOTING THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES THROUGH PUBLIC POLICY

Hillcrest Educational Centers
The Home
HopeWell
JRI (Justice Resource Institute)
KDC (Kennedy-Donovan Center)
The Key Program, Inc.
LUK, Inc.
Old Colony YMCA
Open Sky Community Services
Plummer Youth Promise
RFK Community Alliance
Roxbury Youthworks, Inc.
Saint Vincent's Services
MARE Inc.
Massachusetts MENTOR
New England Community Services (NECS)
NFI Massachusetts, Inc.
Old Colony YMCA
Stetson School
Wayside Youth & Family Support Network