

My name is Judy Wolberg. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to offer feedback as a member of BIJAN. Boston Immigration Justice and Accompaniment Network has been providing volunteer support to unhoused newly arrived immigrant families for approximately 2 years. Since August first we have seen an increased number of families that have fallen through the cracks in the EA system due to the changes made in the state policy. We have accompanied families sleeping outside, in South Station and when there are donated funds placing families in hotels.

You can immediately eliminate the need for any families having to spend a single night on the street by:

1. Reverse the 5 day limit to TRCs and the punitive 6 month ban on being placed on the EA shelter waitlist for families that choose to go to a TRC. Fear of that ban is causing some families to reject the TRC option. Families who exit the TRC without finding housing are then without any hope and face long-term homelessness.
2. Make MVRP vouchers available to all TRC families in order to reduce the numbers of families discharged from the TRC without housing. Give MRVP vouchers to families in EA shelters who are facing discharge without housing. This State assistance in conjunction with RAFT and a HomeBase Program that actually reflects the size of a family will more realistically provide housing opportunities in our severe affordable housing crisis.

Don't wait until the cold weather is upon us. These vulnerable families need protection not only from the elements but also from malicious anti immigrant groups and nefarious individuals.