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**CHARLES D. BAKER**  
GOVERNOR

November 18, 2022

**KARYN E. POLITO**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives:

I submit for your consideration a bill entitled “An Act Making Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2023 to Provide for Supplementing Certain Existing Appropriations and for Certain Other Activities and Projects.”

As you know, over the past several months, the Commonwealth has experienced a dramatic increase in demand for emergency shelter, driven by the arrival of families in the United States from places such as Afghanistan, Haiti, Venezuela, and Ukraine, as a result of federal immigration policies, and in combination with a shortage of affordable housing in the Commonwealth. The volume of new arrivals has remained high through the fall, and while the Emergency Assistance (EA) system is already effectively at 100% capacity, caseload is expected to continue to increase over the coming months. Many of these families need medical care and other services, in addition to shelter. And many of them have school-aged children, some with limited English proficiency, who need to be placed in a school that can meet their needs.

As a right to shelter state, the Commonwealth through its Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is committed to providing safe temporary shelter to these families, while helping them to find permanent housing. To address the recent increase in demand for shelter, we urgently need to expand the capacity of the EA system. Therefore, I am proposing that the Legislature appropriate \$130 million to establish a reserve for immediate needs across all of the agencies that have a role in responding to this crisis. Funding from this reserve—together with the \$20 million reserve recently appropriated by the Legislature in the economic development bill to address the needs of immigrants and refugees—will:

- Cover the cost of the projected increase in EA program caseload through the end of Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23);
- Facilitate the recruitment and retention of necessary service providers by increasing their compensation;
- Support renovation and construction costs to bring new shelter units online;

- Establish and operate a temporary centralized intake center, so EA-eligible families during their first few days in shelter can receive timely and focused case management services and intake assessments.

As we increase shelter capacity throughout the Commonwealth, it is important that we do so equitably and sustainably. I am especially mindful that the placement of families with children in a host community can mean that local officials are challenged to welcome new children into the local schools with little advance notice and that the municipality will bear costs associated with educating these children. To that end, I am proposing that \$37 million of the total reserve be expended to local school districts for emergency student aid for the remainder of the 2022-23 school year and all of the 2023-24 school year. I also have included in this bill an outside section that would authorize the Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, after consultation with local school districts and subject to appropriation, to enroll students from state-placed families in nearby districts in instances where the host community of state-placed families would experience a sudden and significant increase in enrollment due to the state placement.

The bill includes two other outside sections to allow for the efficient use of available resources. The first of these authorizes the Secretary of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development to transfer funds between the EA and the HomeBASE line items in the FY23 budget, which will allow appropriated shelter funding to be utilized where it is most needed across the system. The other outside section ensures that emergency shelter facilities created with the funding from this bill do not have to comply with local requirements that are more stringent than the state sanitary code. In several instances, municipalities have implemented stricter sanitary codes specifically to prevent homeless shelter expansion in their communities. The influx of new arrivals and additional families seeking emergency assistance is a humanitarian crisis we must address across the Commonwealth. These provisions will give our housing agencies the flexibility to stand up non-traditional, temporary shelter facilities if and when needed, in compliance with the state's sanitary code.

Finally, I am renewing my request that \$9.2 million is provided for the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) for the implementation of the Work and Family Mobility Act. This funding is needed now to ensure the RMV can begin hiring and training the additional staff needed to meet the increased demand for services, and enable the RMV to efficiently and securely develop new processes and transaction types required by the legislation.

Although the number of new arrivals and other families in need of emergency assistance over the next 6 to 18 months is difficult to predict, I am confident that the reserve proposed in this bill will be sufficient to meet projected need and address this challenge before the Commonwealth. Sufficient revenues are available to finance the appropriations and other proposed measures, and I urge you to enact this legislation promptly to ensure that we continue to have capacity to shelter all eligible families.



Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Charles D. Baker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Charles" being the most prominent part.

Charles D. Baker  
Governor