Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
Division of Housing Stabilization

To: DHCD Staff and Shelter Providers

From: Ita Mullarkey, Associate Director of Housing Stabilization

Date: February 4, 2020

RE: Excluding **Temporary** U.S. Census Income from Gross Income for Emergency Assistance, HomeBASE, and Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) programs

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Overview

The U.S. Census Bureau is temporarily employing thousands of people, many of whom are low-income, for the Decennial Census in 2020. In general, temporary 2020 Census Bureau employment is nonrecurring, for a limited period of time, and may last from a few weeks to several months. Typical positions are expected to last approximately four to eight weeks, and the hours are expected to range between 20 to 35 hours per week, although hours of work may be reduced if there is a lack of available work. The employment is not expected to lead to permanent positions and it may end at any time. As such, the Federal Government is encouraging public benefit programs to exclude income derived from temporary 2020 census employment when determining eligibility for these programs.

Accordingly, DHCD is pleased to announce that, effective February 4, 2020, **all wages, salaries, any other income that a participant derives from <u>temporary</u> U.S. Census Bureau employment shall be excluded from gross income for the following Housing and Stabilization programs: Emergency Assistance, HomeBASE, and Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT).**

This memorandum provides DHCD staff and shelter providers with guidance regarding the treatment of income derived from temporary 2020 Census Bureau employment. As referenced above, this memorandum is applicable to the following Division of Housing Stabilization benefit programs:

- Emergency Assistance (EA)
- HomeBASE
- Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)

Temporary Census Bureau Income Exclusion

<u>Emergency Assistance</u>:

Temporary income from the U.S. Census will not be included in gross household income when determining initial eligibility for Emergency Assistance set forth in DHCD's regulations regarding program eligibility at 760 CMR 67.02(5)(a)(b) and (c). The requirements set forth in 760 CMR 67.02(5)(a)(b) and

(c), have been waived to exclude any wages, salaries, or other income, however it may be characterized, that may derive from temporary U.S. Census Bureau employment payments for the 2020 Decennial Census, from the calculation of income and determination of program eligibility for EA.

Similarly, when determining continued eligibility for EA under FY2020 Budget Line Item 7004-0101, temporary income from the U.S. Census will not be used in calculating whether a family exceeds 200% of the federal poverty level for a sustained and consecutive period of 90 days.

HomeBASE:

HomeBASE income eligibility requirements are based on the EA eligibility requirements. The exclusion of **temporary** U.S. Census employment payments for the 2020 Decennial Census will also apply to HomeBASE eligibility determinations.

RAFT:

In addition, in determining eligibility for RAFT, **temporary** U.S. Census Bureau employment payments for the 2020 Decennial Census will be excluded.

Please note that, unlike temporary census income, any income for any household members that have **permanent or non-temporary Census Bureau employment** (i.e. not for a limited time) at the U.S. Census Bureau **should be counted as wages in calculating a household's income**.

Questions

If after reading this memorandum you have questions regarding the Emergency Assistance program, please contact Alvina Brevard, Acting Associate Director and Director of Field Operations, at 617-573-1395 or alvina.brevard@mass.gov. If you have any questions regarding HomeBASE or RAFT, please contact Amy Mullen, HomeBASE/RAFT Contract & Compliance Coordinator at 617-573-1368 or amy.mullen2@mass.gov.