

January 9, 2012

The Honorable Deval Patrick
Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Room 356
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Patrick:

On behalf of United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley (UWMBMV), thank you for your efforts in making Massachusetts a better place to live and work. UWMBMV's work ensures that children enter school ready to succeed, youth stay engaged in school so they graduate with options for the future, and parents attain financial stability. I am writing to urge you to maintain your commitment to the well-being of our state's children and their families in the FY2013 budget. We respectfully request that you fund the following:

Early Education and Care

As you know, funding for early education and care has been cut by nearly \$59 million since 2009, and we ask that you work to fully fund the Department of Early Care and Education. We are encouraged that the state is prioritizing its commitment to investing in the early years and are thrilled with the recently-awarded Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant; we look forward to partnering with EEC on this important project.

In that vein, we ask that the Administration consider additional public-private partnerships to ensure the well-being and future productivity of our greatest asset, our children. As children's brains develop and grow in the context of relationships and through stimulation, one program that would positively impact these critical early years is the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS). In 2011, the state awarded 449 grants to support early childhood program quality that reached 17,000 children and their families. We ask that the state strengthen it through the creation of a discrete line item funded at \$4 million.

Youth

Continuing our investment in youth through the teenage years is vital. We appreciate the Administration's plans to address the achievement gap with a focus on Gateway Cities. United Way asks that you consider funding the programs and services listed below.

- Funding to help kids avoid summer learning loss. Results from a 2010 public-private pilot at seven sites statewide showed an astounding 85% of participating youth the typical three month learning loss. The results from this innovative partnership demonstrate that not only can children avoid falling behind in the



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summer, they can actually accelerate their learning; an astounding 68% of the students showed gains in reading skills.

- State mentoring programs (line item 7061-9635) at \$350,000. For every dollar invested in effective mentoring programs there is a return of \$2.72, including projected increases in lifetime earnings gained by helping at-risk youth become productive adult citizens, as well as money saved through reduced juvenile delinquency and crime, improved school attendance, higher high school graduation rates, and a lower risk of involvement in risky behaviors such as drug, alcohol and tobacco use.
- Restore funding to the After School and Out of School Time (ASOST) Quality Enhancement Grant (line item 7061-9611) at \$3 million to ensure that additional children and youth have access to high quality afterschool and out-of-school time programming.
- Development of public-private partnerships establishing school readiness councils, wraparound services for students and their families, outreach and educational and workforce programs for disconnected youth, and programs aimed at English language learners, as outlined in the Administration's education platform.

Housing and Homelessness

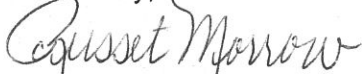
As convener of the Metro Boston Regional Network and an advocate for the state's Housing First strategy, United Way and its partner agencies encourage the Administration to fund the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) (line item 7004-9024) at \$44.3 million. MRVP is an effective tool in addressing the demand on homeless shelters. The average MRVP voucher costs approximately \$600 per month, significantly less than the \$3,000 per month cost of an average shelter.

Asset Building

Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) match the savings of low and moderate income families to help finance the purchase of a house or an educational degree, or to start a business. The state's IDA program was funded from 2007-2009, and the first 125 graduates from the state's IDA program have invested at a level of \$10.1 million in assets, generating a return of \$64.32 for each state dollar invested in the program. Restoring \$250,000 to this line item (7004-9317) would continue to help low and moderate income families become financially stable.

The programs outlined above represent a continuum of services that United Way believes would help people and change conditions in Massachusetts. I thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,



Russet Morrow
Public Policy Director