



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Statement of Sue Marsh, MCH

March 1, 1988

My name is Sue Marsh, and I represent the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, which, with the Coalition for Basic Human Needs, filed the landmark court action which has led to our announcement today.

Right before Christmas of 1985, MCH and CBHN, noting with anger and disappointment the continued lack of funding for the AFDC program which forced thousands of parents and children out of their homes, filed for relief with the Suffolk Superior Court. Both Suffolk Superior Court, and later the Supreme Judicial Court agreed with us that the rights of homeless families and AFDC recipients have been violated through our state's failure to request sufficient levels of AFDC. Further, the courts have found that the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare has a duty to request sufficient aid from the state legislature to enable AFDC families to live in their own homes.

In December of 1987, the Department of Public Welfare attempted to evade its legal obligation of requesting sufficient aid by filing a Report on Standard Budgets of Assistance for the AFDC Program, which misrepresented the gap between what AFDC families need and what they receive. Within this report, the Department of Public Welfare specifically recommended that welfare grants not be increased to adequate levels.

We are here today to say that we reject the state's attempt to assert that mothers and children should continue to struggle with inadequate incomes. We find the administration's report inaccurate and misleading, and we are going back to court for the opportunity to prove this in a trial.

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I wish that we were here today to say that the Dukakis administration has complied with state law and that women and children could live and flourish knowing their basic needs could be met. We cannot. The miracle of Massachusetts is that we tolerate a state administration which flouts state law rather than upholds it.



Coalition For Basic Human Needs

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For immediate release:
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WELFARE RECIPIENTS SEEK TRIAL ON STATE ACTION

Welfare recipients and advocates for the homeless announced plans to put the Dukakis administration on trial to challenge the state's latest assertion that welfare grants not be raised to adequate levels, on March 1, at 2 p.m., at 34½ Beacon Street, Boston.

The challenge to the Department of Public Welfare's recent Report on Standard Budgets of Assistance for the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program, is the latest effort by poor and homeless women to force the Dukakis administration to implement the court order of Judge Charles Grabau. The order calls for welfare grants to be sufficient to enable parents to raise their children in their own homes.

The Report, which outlined the financial need of AFDC families and two possible methods to close the gap between the new need standards and current welfare grants, was submitted to the State Legislative leadership last December. Within this document, the administration specifically recommended that welfare grant levels not be increased to the new standards.

Colleen Costa of the Coalition for Basic Human Needs, and Sue Marsh of the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, representing the plaintiffs in the landmark lawsuit which resulted in Grabau's order, were

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joined by expert witnesses Charles Harak of the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and Professor Michael Stone at the press conference.

Plaintiffs will be filing affidavits in Suffolk Superior Court which will prove that the State has failed to meet its legal obligation in requesting an adequate AFDC grant increase, and has misrepresented to the Legislature the gap between current benefits and the amount necessary for families to maintain homes.

"Considering the Governor's proposed 5.5% increase for AFDC grants is about the same as the inflation rate," said Colleen Costa of CBHN. "The Administration is defying the law and pushing us backwards."

For more information, please contact Colleen Costa (CBHN) at 387-3842, or Sue Marsh (MCH) at 742-6880, or Dottie Stevens (CBHN) at 497-0126/ 298-7311.

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Colleen Costa -- Coalition For Basic Human Needs

We are here today because the State has refused to ask the legislature to raise welfare grants to an amount that will allow families to live within their own homes, which the court ordered them to do last November. The Administration is failing to obey the Court order. They are telling the legislature that we **do not need and should not have** this money. Therefore, we are taking the State back to court.

Welfare grants must be raised drastically so that we can live without the threat of becoming homeless. We must be able to feed ourselves and our children. Without a decent grant amount, we cannot provide our children with the things that they need.

The Administration says that it met the requirements of the Court order when it gave its report on Aid to Families With Dependent Children to the legislative leadership in December. That report is misleading because it says that there are benefits available to families on welfare that most people do not receive. This is one of the things that we will prove in court.

Instead of giving us the money that we need to survive, the State is saying that we should depend on ET and child support to end poverty. ET is not the answer. Not every mother can take a job outside of the home. Many mothers, including those with young or sick children, feel that they cannot be away from their families for long periods of time. Furthermore, how can ET end poverty and homelessness when ET jobs, after work-related expenses, don't provide families with the income required by the court order? Child support is not the answer either. Rarely is child support as much money as the current welfare grant. It certainly doesn't meet the amounts the state, itself, says we need to survive. We intend to prove all of this in court.

Colleen Costa (Con't)

The State isn't giving us anything in its Budget proposal. Given the loss in foodstamps that happens with each grant increase and the current rate of inflation, the proposed 5.5% increase is a step backwards. Families on welfare will be **losing** purchasing power.

Massachusetts is supposed to be one of the richest, most economically sound states in the country. We ask, "Why then are there so many homeless and near homeless women and children in this state?"

We are **angry** that the State is saying that women and children on welfare **should** be poor. We are taking them back to court. Since this Administration will not voluntarily obey the law, we will **force** them to.