

Massachusetts House Democrats to steer \$250 million more into emergency shelter system

By Chris Lisinski

State House News Service

House Democrats are moving this week to steer \$250 million more into the emergency shelter system and impose several new requirements on the state's response as part of a larger spending bill that also seeks to tie off a score of legislative loose ends.

The House Ways and Means Committee opened a poll Tuesday morning on a \$2.74 billion supplemental budget (H 4090) that matches the dollar amount of Gov. Maura Healey's mid-September shelter funding request, but adds specific requirements on how the money would be distributed, including \$50 million for the creation of an "overflow site" for families who are waitlisted for a traditional shelter placement.

If the state fails to create that location within 30 days after the bill is enacted, the legislation would instruct the Healey administration to revoke its declared capacity limit of 7,500 families "until said overflow site or sites are secured and operational."

The bill also calls for the administration to provide a 60-day notice if officials want to cap how long a family could stay in emergency assistance shelter, a step Healey said last week is under consideration.

Most of the spending in the bill – about \$2.1 billion, with a net state cost of \$800 million – would cover "MassHealth caseload adjustments," according to a committee summary. The legislation also features nearly \$300 million for collective

bargaining agreements with public employees, \$100 million for pension obligations, \$75 million to support schools facing additional special education costs, \$60 million for a Department of Transitional Assistance caseworker reserve and \$10 million in flood relief for municipalities.

Representatives on the House Ways and Means Committee were given until 10:45 a.m. to register their position on the proposal. House Speaker Ron Mariano said Monday he plans to call a vote on the supplemental budget Wednesday.