

Good To Know ...

In The News

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COA Board Hears State Effort/Seniors in Need of Rental Aid

Financial aid for seniors seeking assistance with their rent topped the agenda for the Council on Aging's board meeting on May 10 when a local housing advocate took the microphone to explain a pilot program that proposes to fund rental costs for those on waiting lists for subsidized apartments.

Jody Kelley, lead organizer for the Older Adult Housing Stability Campaign by the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, began by setting out the dimensions of the affordable housing problem in Massachusetts, where it is estimated that approximately 313,000 people live in low-income households – “many of them rent-burdened,” she said.

And homelessness among the state's older adult population is expected to nearly triple by 2030, with seniors in their 80s emerging as the fastest-growing age group, Kelley reported. Currently, there is a waiting list of at least five years for subsidized units.

The solution proposed by the campaign launched by the Coalition for the Homeless would provide \$10 million in state funding to create bridge subsidies for as many as 1,000 older adults facing housing instability to help them remain in place while they await approval for state-funded public hous-

ing or a subsidy through the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program. “Once someone is approved for a public or otherwise subsidized unit their voucher would go to someone else,” Kelley said.

Low-income seniors participating in the program would pay 30 percent of their income toward their rent, with the bridge subsidy making up the difference in the total rent. The program would be administered by the state Executive Office of Elder Affairs in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development.

Kelley emphasized that the program, as a pilot, is intended to be temporary only. She also said that “geographic equity” would be taken into account so that no city or town would receive the lion's share of support.

She encouraged COA board members to contact their state legislators and ask them to support the funding initiative.