

## ***Appendix F: Resolution to End Homelessness among Youth and Young Adults in Massachusetts***

Proposed by the MACUCC Mission and Justice Commission and endorsed by the MACUCC Task Team to End Homelessness.

The Bible is filled with invitations, calls and commands “to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God”. (Micah 6:8) We are exhorted to “turn our swords into plowshares and to provide each person with their own vine and fig tree”. (Micah 4:3-4) Jesus reminds us that God commands us “to love our neighbors as ourselves” (Luke 10:27) and to create a just and loving society for all of God’s beloved. We further believe that everyone has a right to decent, affordable housing because of the inherent basic human dignity of each person who is created in God’s image and likeness.

WHEREAS, The 203rd Annual Meeting of the MACUCC passed a resolution calling on our churches to work to end homelessness in the Commonwealth, and that we have passed resolutions on the just Stewardship of Wealth (98-AM-13) and on Welfare Reform (99-AM-7), and has demonstrated over its 202 - year history a commitment to advocating for people who are poor and oppressed;

WHEREAS, During these hard economic times, homelessness is increasing in all groups in the Commonwealth, but in particular, there are over 1025 homeless families<sup>7</sup> living in motels, which could be far from the children’s school of origin, public transportation and employment. This is over and above the 2100 families with children who live in state funded emergency family shelter. This does not count the hundreds of families who are doubled up situations, or living in their car or unsafe situations;

WHEREAS, The 2009 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) Youth At Risk Behavior Survey indicated that: 4.3% or approximately 12, 451 high school students were homeless; 2.0 % or approximately 5,920 high school students were unaccompanied minors. There is an estimated 50,164 homeless students enrolled in Massachusetts public schools<sup>8</sup>;

**Whereas**, statistics do not reveal how many have dropped out;

WHEREAS, Foster care and other state and federally funded programs do not include adult-age teens as part of their mandate;

WHEREAS, An increasing number of these youth and young adults are becoming homeless; and an increasing number of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, queer, questioning, inter-sexed and same gender youth are included in this group often without being recognized: According to ESE, of all homeless high school students, over 20% are sexual minority youth (either self-identify or report same sex behavior)<sup>9</sup>;

WHEREAS, There are few if any shelters that welcome unaccompanied minors;

WHEREAS, Many communities across the Commonwealth have few, if any, units of affordable housing and generally do not welcome low-income or homeless residents and do not have program to help youth and young adults who are homeless;

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<sup>7</sup> According to the Department of Housing & Community Development, Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness figures as of Feb. 3, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Summary of 2009 Youth at Risk Behavior Report, Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, Massachusetts Dept. of Elementary & Secondary Education (ESE), Fall 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, ESE, 9/10.

WHEREAS, The Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, Faith Into Action Together, and programs, such as: Worcester Community Connections Coalition, Journeys to Hope – Lynn, Rediscovery, Inc.- Waltham, Father Bill’s and Mainspring in Quincy and Brockton, Bridge Over Troubled Waters – Boston, Youth Harbors – Malden, DIAL-Self Youth & Community Services Programs- Greenfield, United Teen Equality Center – Lowell, the Homeless Education Liaison in every school district, and many other youth providers, can provide individuals and churches with practical solutions to assist young adults who are homeless through direct services, and to use the political process to advocate with the state legislature to end homelessness in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Faith communities from many traditions have joined this coalition, and are working together to end homelessness for at-risk youth and young adults;

RESOLVED, That the 212th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ calls upon local churches, associations, and the commissions and task teams of the Conference to join with faith based and other coalitions across the Commonwealth, to work together to prevent and end homelessness for youth and young adults; and

RESOLVED, That we call upon our churches, communities, and church members to collaborate with local providers working with homeless youth, and with the education liaison for the homeless in each school district. The purpose of these collaborations will be twofold: first, to help meet basic needs for food, clothing, mentoring, employment, and temporary housing; second, to simultaneously participate in legislative advocacy to prevent and end homelessness, especially for unaccompanied youth ( in particular: House Bill 1862, An Act Providing Housing & Support Services for Unaccompanied Youth.) We further call upon churches and church members to work actively to advocate for and support homelessness prevention and affordable housing options for unaccompanied youth in their communities, and to support the use of state and church land for affordable housing.

#### ACTION PLAN:

In order to support implementation of this Resolution, the Task Team to End Homelessness and the MACUCC Mission and Justice Commission will:

1. Continue to inform MACUCC churches about the legislative process in the Commonwealth as it impacts homeless youth and young adults so that our churches can be advocates in this process.
2. Connect churches with one another through an updated data base and through Conference and Association meetings so that they will feel supported in their existing ministries with the homeless.
3. Assist churches in developing partnerships with neighboring churches, schools and social service agencies so that they can expand resources for homeless youth and young adults.
4. Develop resources to be made available on the MACUCC web site about these issues.
5. Network with the wider United Church of Christ to help MACUCC churches gain a greater awareness of national programs for homeless youth and young adults.
6. To network other churches and agencies in order to reach out to youth no longer attending schools or have run away such as those who have been trafficked.

## Contacts

Rev. Dr. Fran Bogle, chair of the Task Team to End Homelessness, member of the Mission and Justice Commission, Just Peace Coordinator for the Metropolitan Boston Association, MACUCC  
[fbog@aol.com](mailto:fbog@aol.com)

Ms. Angela Knapton, Co-chair of the Mission and Justice Commission [heaven\\_ak@yahoo.com](mailto:heaven_ak@yahoo.com)Ms.  
Barbara Morton, Co-Chair of the Mission and Justice Commission [bgmort@comcast.net](mailto:bgmort@comcast.net)