



Office of  
**Representative Hannah E. Kane**  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
February 7, 2025

CONTACT: Kerry Shea, 617-722-2810

## **Representative Kane continues to push for reforms to the state's emergency assistance shelter program**

*Joins with House Republican colleagues to call for more transparency and accountability*

**BOSTON** – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) continues to advocate for meaningful reforms to the state's emergency assistance shelter program to ensure greater accountability for the state's taxpayers.

Representative Kane recently opposed House Bill 57, a supplemental spending bill calling for the infusion of an additional \$425 million in funding, arguing the state can't continue to keep pouring money into the program without first implementing significant reforms. The bill was ultimately passed by the House of Representatives on a vote of 126-26 on February 6, but still requires Senate approval.

Representative Kane criticized the spending bill for containing minor, and in some cases temporary, reforms that will have little meaningful impact on the shelter program, which is costing the state's taxpayers approximately \$1 billion annually. During floor debate on the bill, she supported a series of reform measures to help enhance transparency, accountability, public safety and fiscal responsibility within the emergency shelter program.

While the underlying bill requires individuals applying for emergency assistance housing benefits to disclose prior criminal convictions and calls for CORI checks prior to placement, these checks are limited to crimes committed in Massachusetts. To strengthen this requirement, the House Republican Caucus offered an amendment to mandate comprehensive universal background checks that will disclose criminal records at the state, federal and international levels to help keep dangerous criminals out of the shelter system. The amendment was rejected on a vote of 26-125.

To further enhance public safety in the Commonwealth, Representative Kane also supported several proposals to authorize the honoring of civil detainer requests issued by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), in response to the Supreme Judicial Court's 2017 Lunn ruling. The SJC ruled that Massachusetts law does not explicitly allow local law enforcement to hold someone based on a civil detainer request from ICE beyond the time they would otherwise be released from custody but said it would "defer to the legislature to establish and define that authority." These amendments would have allowed officials to keep dangerous criminals who are considered removable aliens by ICE – including those engaging in criminal street gang activity, human trafficking, rape and murder – in custody for anywhere from 12 to 48 hours but each amendment was ruled out of order by leadership as being beyond the scope of the bill. The House Republican Caucus doubted the ruling of the chair, but in each instance the ruling prevailed.

During floor debate, House Republicans also pushed for reducing the funding allocation for the emergency shelter program from \$425 million to \$200 million, arguing that the state auditor is currently conducting a comprehensive audit of the program and noting that changes in immigration laws at the federal level should help to reduce the number of people coming to Massachusetts seeking shelter. Representative Kane noted that the reduced funding will allow the state to continue to provide core services to Massachusetts residents in need

while allowing additional time to see how the recent changes will impact enrollment. The amendment failed on a vote of 26-126.

In an attempt to restore the original intent of the state's right to shelter law, House Republicans offered an amendment to limit program admissions to individuals who have established Massachusetts residency for at least 12 consecutive months immediately prior to the date of application. This minimum residency requirement would be waived for victims of domestic violence and for individuals whose living situation has been affected by a fire or other natural disaster that occurred in Massachusetts. While Representative Kane supported the amendment, it was defeated on a vote of 26-124. Additional amendments to limit shelter admission to residents and to individuals whose cause of homelessness resulted in Massachusetts were also defeated, one on a roll call vote of 25-127 and the other on a voice vote.

The one Republican amendment that was adopted during floor debate would require all funding expended for providing services through the emergency housing assistance program to be subject to a competitive bidding process, which passed on a vote of 152-0. In March of 2024, the House Republican Caucus successfully secured language in a previous supplemental budget imposing a competitive bidding requirement for all food contracts related to the emergency shelter system, following reports of a no-bid contract that cost the state close to \$10 million. Representative Kane said the new amendment will extend competitive bidding protections to all aspects of the emergency shelter system that receive state funding in an effort to help eliminate wasteful spending.

House Bill 57 now moves to the Senate for its consideration.

###