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Statement by Joe Diamond, MASSCAP Executive Director, on the Allocation by the Baker Administration of \$19 Million for Fuel Assistance

Boston, MA, April 17, 2019 – We very much appreciate and are grateful to our elected officials – our legislators and the governor - for being so responsive and sensitive to the needs of our vulnerable friends and neighbors living with low-incomes and struggling with high energy burdens which are a drain on their limited resources and threaten their health and safety.

To redress in part the steady decline over the past several years in federal fuel assistance, made worse by a drastic reduction this year, our champions in the legislature – indeed the entire legislature - advocated for and ultimately included \$30 million for fuel assistance in the FY 19 supplemental budget, which the Governor signed.

We thank the Governor for responding to the spirit of the emergency appropriation in the legislature's FY 19 State Supplemental Budget by immediately releasing \$19 million for this winter's applicants. This allocation comes after several days of conversations we have had with legislative leaders and the administration to settle on an allocation – a compromise - that balances the intent of the legislature with the Governor's perspective...and moves us forward so that we can do what inspired us to get to this point together: help our friends and neighbors in need.

The allocation of \$19 million yesterday by the Governor, while not the full amount of \$30 million we and our legislative champions advocated for, will allow community action agencies to help all 160,000 fuel assistance households to address their urgent energy needs – oil heat households will be able to add 100 gallons of home heating oil to depleted tanks and natural gas and electric customers will be able to pay bills and in some cases start payment plans for overdue bills and avoid shut offs.

The completion of this process is good news and reinforces our hope that any future funding for fuel assistance comes earlier in the fiscal year. We must work together to develop a more timely, responsive, and sustainable approach to supporting fuel assistance in the face of its unstable federal funding – an approach that advocates, providers, elected and appointed officials, and the people we serve can rely on.

Thank you to the entire legislature and the governor for working with us on behalf of the people we serve.

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