



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE SIMON CATALDO

*14th Middlesex*

February 7, 2023

Like many of you, I recently learned that the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has entered an agreement to use up to 105 rooms at the Best Western on Elm Street in Concord as an emergency family shelter. The initial term of this arrangement is from March 1 until June 20, 2023, and DHCD plans to use the Best Western in this manner for at least one year.

Based on my conversations with DHCD, I have learned the following information. The information below is consistent with, and expands upon, the information in the Town of Concord's February 2, 2023, press release

(<https://www.concordma.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=1414>).

- The administration recently resumed the practice of using hotels as temporary family shelters. DHCD arrived at its decision to use the Best Western in Concord as an emergency family shelter in the context of a state-wide shortage of emergency shelter units for families. This shortage of beds is acute in the Concord area. Many of the families who are experiencing emergency housing needs are from this area, and some of the children who would be housed at the Best Western temporarily are already enrolled in nearby public schools.
- DHCD currently plans to use the Best Western to provide temporary housing for 3-5 business days at a time for families with children and pregnant women.
- Families experiencing homelessness seek services by visiting a DHCD field office or calling the agency's telephonic intake system. Additionally, some are referred from other systems of care.
- Families must establish Massachusetts residency to be eligible for this type of emergency shelter.
- DHCD has hired an on-site human services provider, Making Opportunities Count ("MOC"), <https://www.mocinc.org/>. MOC provides 24/7 services and is tasked with addressing the human services needs that residents may have while staying at the Best Western. Included among these services is the provision of security personnel.



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Over the past two days, I have been in communication with the School Superintendent, Town Staff, the DHCD's Legislative Liaison, and the other two members of Concord's legislative delegation. I have reached out to MOC and the owner of the Best Western for meetings, which I expect will occur soon.

As your State Representative and your neighbor in the Elm Street area, I share the concerns that many of you have expressed to me about the suitability of this location for this purpose, the preparedness of the service providers in our area to address the needs of the new prospective residents, and the impact that using the Best Western in this manner will have on various local resources and agencies. I have also heard from Concord residents who want to provide help to families in need and have asked how they can help. I am working diligently to gather more reliable information, and will be collaborating with the relevant stakeholders to communicate accurate information to the public.

Additionally, I am mindful that DHCD, and all state and local agencies addressing housing and homelessness, are operating amidst a severe housing shortage and with resources that are currently inadequate to address the gravity of the challenge. It is my understanding that the Governor's administration is using these temporary sites at hotels in 15 different municipalities around the Commonwealth, and the options are limited.

It is my expectation that whatever shape this process ultimately takes, and whoever is here for however long, the Concord community will rise to the challenge and will do so with grace. Our residents have already begun to exhibit that quality by raising well-founded concerns that demonstrate both empathy for our potential visitors and the insights of your lived experiences.

Sincerely,

Simon Cataldo  
State Representative, 14<sup>th</sup> Middlesex District