



# Coalition For Basic Human Needs

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## **Governor "Arrested" By Welfare Recipients**

BOSTON -- At 1:00 PM today, welfare recipients and supporters of the Up and Out of Poverty Campaign (to raise welfare benefits to the poverty level), marched on the office of Governor Dukakis with a mock warrant for his arrest. Members of the Coalition For Basic Human Needs (CBHN), the state welfare rights organization, charged that the Governor broke the law when he did not request a dramatic increase in welfare grant levels in his budget proposal. CBHN member, Dorothy Stevens said, "The Court ordered the Administration to request funding from the legislature for significantly higher grant levels so that families would not live with the constant threat of homelessness. The Administration, under Dukakis' leadership, failed. The Governor is breaking the law." Along with the mock warrant, the group served the Governor with two other citizens complaints, which charged that he is neglecting the children of the Commonwealth and bureaucratically battering their mothers.

While the serving of the citizen's arrest, today, was a dramatization, the group is, in fact, waging a legal battle against the state. The Coalition For Basic Human Needs and the Massachusetts Coalition For the Homeless (MCH) filed suit against the state three years ago and obtained a judgement in their favor. They now continue to fight both inside and outside of the Court to realize their goal, which is to dramatically increase welfare grants.

At noon, just prior to the action, hundreds of recipients and other supporters of the campaign, gathered in front of the State House to protest the Governor's proposed 5.5% increase in welfare benefits. At the rally, which was organized by the Women's Campaign for Social Justice, MCH and CBHN, speakers demanded that welfare grants immediately be increased to

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the amounts the State, itself, says families need to survive. During the rally, CBHN spokesperson Colleen Costa said, "With the current rate of inflation running at approximately 5% and the loss of foodstamps that occurs with each welfare grant increase, AFDC recipients would lose purchasing power under the Governor's proposal."

Karen Rock, a representative from the Alliance for Economic Justice in Hampshire County, asserted, "Homelessness cannot be prevented by punitive welfare reforms which drive mothers into low-paying jobs. They [welfare grants] are not unlike provisions afforded concentration camp victims, devised to keep humans teetering on the brink of survival."

MichaelAnn Bewsee of ARISE, a welfare rights group from Springfield, challenged the state to "stop treating us like children and give us the money we need to prevent us from becoming homeless, instead of helping us after we become homeless."

The rally and action were scheduled to coincide with the hearing held by the Human Services Committee on the Up and Out of Poverty Bill. During the hearing, welfare mothers described their financial plight and its effect on their children. HenryAnn Moff of ARISE, testified, "I have two hungry teenage boys. Do you know what it's like trying to feed them on 105 dollars worth of foodstamps a month?"

Janie Gibbs from CBHN summed up the day saying, "How can the Governor say he is qualified to take care of this country when he can't even help people out of poverty in Massachusetts?"

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