

ABC 40

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By: Jim Cline

SPRINGFIELD, Mass (wggb)-- Brittany Walker wound up homeless a year ago. She says she was living with her mother in a 3-bedroom apartment. "There was 4 of us living there," she says, "It was hard for her and she got to the point where she couldn't take it anymore and everybody had to go." And so Brittany and her two children were sent to Holyoke to a shelter. Brittany bounced from shelter to shelter until she found a fit last September at the Prospect House in Springfield. And if all goes well she'll be moving into an apartment soon. But it took more than a year for this to happen, and that's cost the state a considerable amount of money.

Deborah Fung, the executive director of the Paul and Phyllis Fireman Foundation, says "if we could shorten shelter stays to six months in Massachusetts and make sure the families had an apartment to go to at the end of those 6 months, we would save 40-million dollars in one year." Fund says the state spent about 150-million dollars this past year in it's response to homeless families. The state senate's budget proposal unveiled on Wednesday includes 3 and a half million dollars to shelter homeless families in efficiency apartments, something with a kitchen. Sen. Stephen Buoniconti doesn't think it's enough. "The money doesn't go nearly far enough," he says. "In my opinion we still need a radical reformed change to how we are handling the homelessness here and across the state."