

HOUSE No. 1792

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Nine

An Act to establish a Self Sufficiency Standard in the Commonwealth..

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Not later than October 1, 2009, the Commonwealth Corporation, known in
2 this Act as the Corporation, shall develop a self-sufficiency standard for the commonwealth,
3 known in this Act as the standard. As used in this Act, the term "self-sufficiency standard," as
4 defined by Wider Opportunities for Women and The Crittenton Women’s Union, shall mean the
5 amount of income needed by a family or household to provide for adequate housing, food, child
6 care, health care, transportation and employment-related expenses, and to pay taxes. The
7 Corporation may enter into a contract through the competitive procurement process for the
8 development of such standard.

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10 SECTION 2. (1) Such standard shall take into account the family size and age of
11 children, and shall take into account regional variations in the costs of housing and child care, the
12 differential inflation rates that affect the growth of these costs, and the effect of existing tax laws,
13 including state sales tax, payroll taxes, federal and state income tax, child care tax credits and the
14 earned income tax credit. In developing the standard, the Corporation shall rely, to the extent

15 possible, on data reported by the United States Census Bureau, United States Department of
16 Housing and Urban Development and on other data reported to state and federal agencies using
17 standardized methodology and shall consult with state departments or agencies that serve low-
18 income populations.

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20 Housing costs will be determined using fair market rents for apartments as reported by
21 the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. Child care costs will be
22 determined using average costs for licensed child care facilities, including, but not limited to,
23 family day care, as reported to the commonwealth's child care resource and referral agencies for
24 children of different ages in different areas of the state.

25 (2) The president of the Corporation shall establish an advisory board to advise the
26 Corporation on all matters relating to the development of a self-sufficiency standard and future
27 revisions to it. The advisory board shall be composed of 26 members, each of whom shall serve a
28 term of 2 years. The following shall be members of the board: the secretary of the executive
29 office of administration and finance or his designee; the secretary of the executive office of
30 health and human services or his designee; the secretary of the executive office of labor and
31 workforce development or his designee; the commissioner of the department of revenue or his
32 designee; the undersecretary of the department of housing and community development or his
33 designee; the secretary of the executive office of education; the commissioner of the department
34 of early education and care or his designee; 4 members of the senate, 3 of whom shall be
35 appointed by the president of the senate and 1 by the senate minority leader; 4 members of the
36 house of representatives, 3 of whom shall be appointed by the speaker of the house of

37 representatives and 1 by the house minority leader; 1 faculty member of a Massachusetts
38 university or college with research expertise in the areas of demographics, living costs and labor
39 markets to be selected by the Commonwealth Corporation; and representatives of the following
40 10 organizations to be nominated by their respective organizations and selected by the
41 Commonwealth Corporation: the Crittenton Women’s Union; the Massachusetts AFL-CIO; the
42 Associated Industries of Massachusetts; the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges;
43 the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation; the Massachusetts Workforce Board Association; the
44 Massachusetts Community Action Program Directors’ Association; the Massachusetts
45 Workforce Investment Association; the Citizens’ Housing and Planning Association; and the
46 Massachusetts Association of Day Care Agencies. Members of the advisory board shall serve
47 without compensation.

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49 SECTION 3. Not later than March 31, 2010, the Commonwealth Corporation shall report
50 the self-sufficiency standard, including the methodology used to arrive at the standard to the
51 clerks of the house of representatives and senate, the house and senate committees on ways and
52 means and the joint committee on labor and workforce development. The standard shall be
53 distributed to each of the state executive offices and state agencies that counsel individuals who
54 are seeking education, training or employment, including, but not limited to, the executive office
55 of health and human services, the executive office of labor and workforce development, the
56 department of transitional assistance, the department of public health, the department of children
57 and families, the Massachusetts rehabilitation commission, the department of housing and
58 community development, the executive office of housing and economic development, the
59 Massachusetts office of business development, the Massachusetts department of early education

60 and care, the executive office of education, all local workforce investment boards and all
61 Massachusetts one-stop career centers. The standard shall be made available to educational
62 institutions, nonprofit organizations, and the general public upon request. The standard shall also
63 be made available on any internet site established and maintained by the Commonwealth
64 Corporation.

65 (2) Such state agencies and other entities may use the updated standard to assist and
66 guide individuals who are seeking education, training or employment in establishing personal
67 financial goals and estimating the amount of income such individuals may need to support their
68 families.

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70 Section 4. The standard shall be updated and issued every other year by the
71 Commonwealth Corporation and shall be reported on March 31 in the second year of each sitting
72 of the general court, with the next update on March 31, 2012.

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74 Section 5. The standard shall not be used to increase the amount of entitlement benefits
75 provided by the Commonwealth, unless enacted by the Legislature and subject to appropriation,
76 and said standard shall not give rise to enforceable legal rights in any party to services or
77 entitlements or an enforceable entitlement to services or benefits not currently provided.