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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:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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