

SENATE No. 37

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Nine

An Act Relative to Workers' Pathways to Self Sufficiency.

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. Education Rewards Grant Program

2 Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, not less than 10 days after the
3 effective date of this act, the comptroller shall transfer \$4,500,000 from the General Fund to the
4 Educational Rewards Grant

5 Program Fund established pursuant to section 2SSS of chapter 29 of the General Laws;
6 provided that up to \$1,500,000 of said funding shall be used for a "Supports for Success" pilot
7 program to assist Educational Rewards recipients complete their degree or certificate programs;
8 provided further, that supports provided through said pilot may include but need not be limited to
9 intensive advising and counseling, college and career success courses, work study jobs in the
10 students' field of study, learning communities, curricula redesign to support blended or
11 accelerated remediation, mentoring or tutoring, and child care and transportation assistance;
12 provided further, that on or before December 1 of each year, the Board of Higher Education in
13 collaboration with the Office of Student Financial Assistance shall submit to the house and
14 senate clerks and the chairs of house and senate committees on ways and means a report

describing how funds in said section 2SSS were used in the prior fiscal year, including but not limited to, how many grants were distributed to how many students and in what amounts, the level of educational attainment of grant recipients, persistence from semester to semester, degrees and certificates awarded to recipients, and analysis of the strengths and areas of needed improvement in the primary program and the pilot program and recommendations for such improvements.

SECTION 2. Education & Training for TAFDC Recipients

Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary and to the maximum extent possible in light of the need to preserve available sources of federal funding, it is the policy of the Commonwealth to encourage low-income parents, including those who receive assistance under the program of transitional aid to families with dependent children, to obtain the vocational educational training they need to obtain and retain good paying jobs with benefits that will enable them to support their families in the longer term. Consistent with this policy, the department of transitional assistance shall:

a) in collaboration with the workforce development system and the community college system, maintain in each local office of the department an up-to-date listing and description of all vocational educational programs within the relevant geographic region that can be accessed at little or no cost to the individual, including adult basic education, English for speakers of other languages, skills training, certificate programs, and higher education programs;

b) at least 30 days before an individual becomes subject to the work program requirement pursuant to section 110(j) of chapter 5 of the acts of 1995 and before completion of any Employment Development Plan pursuant to section 110(h) of said chapter 5, (i) inform that

individual orally and in writing that said work program requirement may be met by participation in vocational educational programs, including adult basic education, English for speakers of other languages, skills training, certificate programs, and higher education programs, (ii) inform that individual of all vocational educational programs available in the relevant geographic region that can be accessed at little or no cost to the individual, and (iii) inform that individual of the policies described in subsections (e) and (f) of this section;

c) at least 30 days before an individual becomes subject to the work program requirement pursuant to section 110(j) of chapter 5 of the acts of 1995 and before completion of any Employment Development Plan pursuant to section 110(h) of said chapter 5, provide that individual with counseling on how to access vocational educational training without incurring debt, including but not limited to information on the availability of funding for such programs through the Employment Services Program, the Workforce Investment Act, PELL grants, the Educational Rewards program, the Department of Education, and appropriate referrals to such vocational educational training;

d) use funds appropriated for the department's Employment Services Program to expand the availability of programs that integrate skills training with adult basic education for those without a high school diploma and/or English for speakers of other language instruction for those with limited English proficiency, including but not limited to programs at community colleges;

e) allow individuals to satisfy their work program requirements pursuant to said section 110(j), in whole or in part and throughout their periods of time limited benefits and any extension periods, by participating in vocational educational training programs.