

SENATE No. 37

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

James B. Eldridge

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act promoting financial stability and asset development.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>
<i>Sonia Chang-Diaz</i>	<i>Second Suffolk</i>
<i>Kay Khan</i>	<i>11th Middlesex</i>
<i>Linda Dorcena Forry</i>	<i>12th Suffolk</i>
<i>Carl M. Sciortino, Jr.</i>	<i>34th Middlesex</i>
<i>Thomas P. Conroy</i>	<i>13th Middlesex</i>
<i>Jason M. Lewis</i>	<i>Fifth Middlesex</i>
<i>Jennifer E. Benson</i>	<i>37th Middlesex</i>

SENATE No. 37

By Mr. Eldridge, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 37) of James B. Eldridge, Sonia Chang-Diaz, Kay Khan, Linda Dorcena Forry and other members of the General Court for legislation to promote asset development in transitional assistance programs. Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. 1839 OF 2011-2012.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Thirteen

An Act promoting financial stability and asset development.

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

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

13 b) at least 30 days before an individual becomes subject to the work program requirement
14 pursuant to section 110 (j) of chapter 5 of the acts of 1995 and before completion of any
15 Employment Development Plan pursuant to section 110 (h) of said chapter 5, (i) inform the
16 individual orally and in writing that said work program requirement may be met by participation

17 in vocational educational programs, including adult basic education, English for speakers of
18 other languages, skills training, certificate programs, and higher education programs, (ii) inform
19 the individual of all vocational educational programs available in the relevant geographic region
20 that can be accessed at little or no cost to the individual, and (iii) inform that individual of the
21 policies described in subsections (e) and (f) of this section;

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

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

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

38 f) grant extensions of the time limit to enable individuals to complete such programs if
39 they are making satisfactory progress toward an achievable vocational goal.

40 SECTION 2. Subsection (b) of section 110 of chapter 5 of the acts of 1995, as most
41 recently amended by section 308 of chapter 159 of the acts of 2000, is further amended by
42 striking out said subsection and inserting in place thereof the following new subsection:

43 (b) In order to encourage asset development, promote employment, prevent
44 homelessness, and simplify administration, otherwise eligible families shall not be subject to a
45 resource limit.

46 SECTION 3. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, in order to
47 encourage asset development, promote employment, prevent homelessness, and simplify
48 administration, persons otherwise eligible for the program of emergency aid to elders, disabled
49 and children under chapter 117A of the General Laws shall not be subject to a resource limit.

50 SECTION 4. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, on or before
51 October 1, 2013, the department of transitional assistance shall establish a generally applicable

work expense deduction within the program of transitional aid to families with dependent children at a level intended to cover work expenses incurred by working recipients, including but not limited to payroll deductions, transportation, and clothing expenses. Said work expense deduction shall initially be no less than \$250 and shall thereafter be adjusted annually to reflect inflation.

SECTION 5. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, payments under state or private work study programs and state grants for education or training shall not be counted as income or a resource in determining eligibility for or benefits levels under the program of emergency aid to elders, disabled and children under chapter 117A of the General Laws and the program of transitional aid to families with dependent children under chapter 118 of the General Laws.

SECTION 6. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary and in order to encourage asset development, promote employment, and prevent homelessness, with respect to the programs of emergency aid to elders, disabled and children under chapter 117A of the general laws and transitional aid to families with dependent children under chapter 118 of the General Laws, the department of transitional assistance shall treat as uncountable with regard to any maximum countable resource limits and the lump sum income rule up to \$10,000 that has been expended or is placed in an Individual Asset Account for later expenditure for costs related to education or training, transportation to work or to other activities of daily living, obtaining or retaining or maintaining housing, debt reduction, starting a business, health care, basic household necessities, or other responsible expenses as identified by the department.