HOUSE . . . . . No. 4498

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, March 5, 2020.

The committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities, to whom was referred the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 173) of Aaron Vega and others relative to economic mobility for families with low-income, reports recommending that the accompanying bill (House, No. 4498) ought to pass.

For the committee,

KAY KHAN.

FILED ON: 2/4/2020

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In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court
(2019-2020)

An Act relative to economic mobility for families with low-income.

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. Chapter 18 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 39 the following section:-

Section 40. (a) The department of transitional assistance shall establish a telephone hotline for citizens to have the ability to get advice on program benefits, program eligibility, application processes and intersectionality with other programs facilitated by agencies other than the department of transitional assistance, including but not limited to the executive office of housing and economic development, the executive office of labor and workforce development, and the executive office of education.

(b) There shall be a benefits calculator for use by the public through a website with instructions for the public.

(c) Information about the hotline and benefits calculator including the phone number shall be posted on the executive office of health and human services, executive office of housing and economic development, executive office of labor and workforce development

office's websites, and be made available to homeless service providers in a form appropriate for distribution to their clients.

(d) The department of transitional assistance shall provide training for calculating benefits using a benefits calculator in order to optimize benefits to avoid cliff effects to executive offices and agencies involved in distributing benefits programs.

SECTION 2. (a) The executive office of health and human services, the department of transitional assistance, executive office of housing and economic development, executive office of labor and workforce development and executive office of education shall file an annual report based on data from the previous fiscal year for the purposes of gaining a deeper understanding of housing instability faced by families in order to efficiently predict and better direct homelessness prevention and housing resources. The report shall include the following metrics:

(1) The number of client households that have been identified as homeless and at risk of homelessness by each agency; (2) The numbers of households receiving Emergency Assistance Shelter also receiving benefits and services from the following: (i)Department of Transitional Assistance – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Transitional Aid for Families with Dependent Children; (ii) Workforce Development Programs; (iii) Department of Children and Families; (iv)Department of Public Health - Early Intervention Services (v) MassHealth; and (vi) income sources for families in shelter; (3) MassHealth data on housing instability screening for patients; (4) The stability of households that have received assistance from the HomeBASE program, including, the number of households that have received assistance from the HomeBASE program under line-item 7004-0108, the numbers of households that were evicted, the numbers that returned to shelter, number of households with DCF involvement, numbers

with incomes below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level. The Department shall coordinate with programs under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services on matching data sets for the purposes of this report; (5) The number of contracted slots for homeless children and the current utilization, the number of childcare vouchers issued to homelessness households based off of data from the Department of Early Education and Care; and (6) The cross agency working groups and committees relative to homelessness, that are currently active at the state agencies, will submit their reports and finding on housing stability and economic mobility.

(b) The report shall be submitted to the clerks of the house and the senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on children families and persons with disabilities, the joint committee on labor and workforce development and the interagency council on housing and homelessness no later than October 31 of each year.

SECTION 3. The executive office of administration and finance in conjunction with the executive office of health and human services, the department of transitional assistance, the executive office of housing and economic development, the executive office of labor and workforce development and the executive office of education shall conduct and publish an impact study report on the impacts of minimum wage increase as directed in the chapter 121 of the acts of 2018 on households with low incomes who would lose the eligibility of benefits due to the wage increase with decline in net resources and face cliff effects. The impact study shall also recommend directives to determine ways to adjust assistance in response to changes in income, including but not limited to automatic adjustments tied to minimum wage increases and options for increasing utilization of the earned income tax credit in order to prevent families from facing cliff effects. The report shall be submitted to the clerks of the house and the senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on children families

and persons with disabilities, the joint committee on labor and workforce development and the interagency council on housing and homelessness no later than January 1, 2022.

SECTION 4. The executive office of health and human services, the department of transitional assistance, executive office of housing and economic development, executive office of labor and workforce development and executive office of education shall examine economic mobility programs, recommend criteria for evaluation and create a mechanism for evaluating economic mobility programs for program outcomes including changes in earned income, education and state and federally funded services and the feedback of participants and those not enrolled in programs, for the purpose of producing a report. The report shall recommend directives for each executive office to expand outreach to eligible non-participants to boost enrollment. The report shall outline the outcomes for economic mobility and financial stability programs for families and individuals with extremely low incomes, as defined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. The report shall be submitted to the clerks of the house and the senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on children families and persons with disabilities, the joint committee on labor and workforce development and the interagency council on housing and homelessness no later than January 1, 2022.

SECTION 5. Section 2 is hereby repealed.

SECTION 6. Section 5 shall take effect on December 31, 2027.