

HOUSE No. 5508

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Tara T. Hong

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 relative to veterans' housing stability.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Tara T. Hong</i>	<i>18th Middlesex</i>	<i>6/1/2026</i>

HOUSE No. 5508

By Representative Hong of Lowell, a petition (subject to Joint Rule 12) of Tara T. Hong for legislation to establish a veteran rental assistance bridge program. Veterans and Federal Affairs.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)**

An Act relative to veterans’ housing stability.

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

1 Chapter 23B of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 35 the
2 following 2 sections:-

3 Section 35A. (a) As used in this section, the following words shall, unless the context
4 otherwise requires, have the following meanings:

5 “Secretary”, the secretary of housing and livable communities.

6 “Program”, the veteran rental assistance bridge program.

7 (b) The secretary, in consultation with the secretary of veterans' services, shall establish a
8 veteran rental assistance bridge program to assist veterans experiencing: (i) increased housing
9 rents; (ii) living on fixed incomes, disability compensation or modest wages; (iii) long wait times
10 for receiving approved veteran federal housing vouchers; and (iv) eviction or homelessness in
11 the commonwealth.

12 (c) Eligibility for the program shall include veterans: (i) approved for a veteran federal
13 housing voucher but are waiting for issuance or lease-up; (ii) at imminent risk of eviction; (iii)
14 experiencing a sudden loss of income; and (iv) transitioning from homelessness or institutional
15 settings.

16 (d)(1) The program shall provide assistance in addressing obstacles to maintaining or
17 securing rental assistance for veterans and their families for housing with a household income: (i)
18 not more than 30 per cent of area median income who are homeless and moving into subsidized
19 or private housing or are at risk of becoming homeless; or (ii) more than 30 per cent but not more
20 than 50 per cent of area median income who are homeless and moving into subsidized or private
21 housing or are at risk of becoming homeless due to a significant reduction of income or increased
22 expenses.

23 (2) The program shall be administered by the local housing authorities in the city or town,
24 in consultation with the veteran service officer in the city or town.

25 (3) The program shall provide: (i) up to 24 months of temporary rental assistance; (ii) a
26 security deposit for a rental property; (iii) rental coverage for the first and last month rent for the
27 rental property; and (iv) flexible rental support to prevent eviction.

28 (e) The secretary shall coordinate with: (i) local veteran service officers; (ii) the housing
29 court department pursuant to chapter 185C; (iii) local housing continuums of care; and (iv)
30 emergency shelters in the commonwealth to best implement the program.

31 (f) The secretary shall establish for the program a designation to prioritize veterans who
32 are at risk of homelessness. Upon designation of a veteran as being at risk of homelessness, the
33 secretary shall: (i) expedite a rental assistance review of the veteran; (ii) require mandatory

34 mediation before the eviction of the veteran when possible; and (iii) rapidly refer the veteran to
35 stabilization services.

36 (g) Qualified nonprofit organizations as defined in section 35 that have contracted with
37 the secretary to establish veterans' supportive housing pursuant to said section 35 shall receive
38 increased funding, prioritizing gateway cities and regions in the commonwealth with high
39 veteran housing instability, for: (i) developing additional veteran-designated supportive housing
40 units; (ii) veteran case management services; (iii) mental health support for veterans and their
41 families; (iv) veteran employment services; and (v) substance use recovery support for veterans.

42 (h) The secretary, in consultation with the secretary of veterans' services, shall prepare an
43 annual report on the costs and outcomes of the program including a comparison of the costs of
44 homelessness prevention to emergency shelter, hospital stays and long-term instability. The
45 annual report shall include, but not be limited to: (i) the current status of veteran homelessness in
46 the commonwealth; (ii) wait times for veteran federal housing voucher activation for veterans'
47 housing; and (iii) cost savings from prevention versus emergency shelter placement. The annual
48 report shall be submitted, not later than December 31 of each year of the program, to the
49 governor, the lieutenant governor, the chairs of the joint committee on veterans and federal
50 affairs and the clerks of the house of representatives and senate.

51 (i) The secretary, in consultation with the secretary of veterans' services, shall promulgate
52 rules or regulations for the administration of the program.

53 Section 35B. (a) There shall be within the executive office of housing and livable
54 communities a Veteran Rental Assistance Bridge Program Fund. The fund shall be credited with:

55 (i) revenue from appropriations or other money authorized by the general court and specifically

56 designated to be credited to the fund; (ii) interest earned on such revenue; and (iii) funds from
57 public and private sources and other gifts, grants and donations to encourage philanthropic
58 partnerships for the veterans' housing, including, but not limited to, funds from governmental,
59 quasi-governmental, nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations and individuals. Amounts
60 credited to the fund shall not be subject to further appropriation and any money remaining in the
61 fund at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert to the General Fund.

62 (b) The secretary of housing and livable communities shall administer the fund consistent
63 with the requirements of the veteran rental assistance bridge program established in section 35A.

64 (c) Annually, not later than June 30, the secretary of housing and livable communities
65 shall report on all expenditures from the Veteran Rental Assistance Bridge Program Fund to: (i)
66 the chairs of the joint committee on housing; (ii) the chairs of the joint committee on veterans
67 and federal affairs; (iii) the house and senate committees on ways and means; and (iv) the clerks
68 of the house of representatives and senate.