

HOUSE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Carlos González

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 establishing the Massachusetts rental assistance and financial stability program.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Carlos González</i>	<i>10th Hampden</i>	<i>1/17/2025</i>

HOUSE No.

[Pin Slip]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act establishing the Massachusetts rental assistance and financial stability program.

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. Chapter 23 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition,
2 is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

3 Section 31. (a) The executive office, in conjunction with the department of transitional
4 assistance, the office of Medicaid, housing consumer education centers and community action
5 agencies as defined in section 24 of chapter 23B, shall administer a program of rental assistance
6 and financial stability to prevent recidivism and evictions and to support individuals and heads of
7 households who receive government rental assistance, including but not limited to the
8 Massachusetts rental voucher program, alternative housing voucher program, residential
9 assistance for families in transition and HomeBASE.

10 The executive office shall administer the program throughout the commonwealth to
11 provide technical assistance to housing consumer education centers to: (i) oversee the finances of
12 program participants, (ii) promote access to budgeting services, (iii) promote timely payments to
13 landlords and utilities, and (iv) promote access to healthcare and food security.

14 Any state or local agency or community program may refer residents to this program,
15 including but not limited to the housing courts.

16 (b) The housing consumer education centers shall work with program participants to
17 develop a program plan, in which a program participant sets goals to achieves financial stability
18 and authorizes the housing consumer education center to manage their finances on their behalf,
19 including but not limited to accepting income and making payments.

20 (c) The program shall promote financial oversight by establishing a dedicated team with
21 low-income housing managers and housing assistance agencies responsible for managing and
22 overseeing the financial components of the program. The housing consumer education centers
23 shall collaborate with local agencies and financial institutions to establish bank accounts for
24 program participants, which shall receive the income of program participants and may make
25 direct payments for rent, utilities, food and healthcare expenses, as designated in the program
26 plan.

27 The executive office shall develop a secure online platform or mobile application for
28 program participants to access and manage their accounts, track expenses and receive financial
29 guidance.

30 (d) The program shall provide budgeting assistance by assigning a financial counselor to
31 each program participant to achieve financial stability, including but not limited to: (i)
32 establishing personal budgets, (ii) setting financial goals and (iii) providing ongoing support and
33 guidance. The program shall provide comprehensive financial literacy training and counseling to
34 participants, covering topics including but not limited to (i) personal budgeting, (ii) debt
35 management and (iii) savings. The housing consumer education centers shall encourage program

36 participants to attend workshops and seminars focused on building financial resilience and
37 improving money management skills.

38 (e) The program shall provide rent payment assistance by: (i) collaborating with landlords
39 and property owners to establish direct payment arrangements, ensuring that rental payments are
40 made promptly and consistently, (ii) conducting regulation communication with landlords to
41 address any concerns or issues related to payment processing or tenant compliance and (iii)
42 establishing a system for program participants to report any special emergencies or needs to
43 ensure safe and healthy living conditions. Program participants may request the ability to
44 modify plans.

45 (f) The program shall support healthcare access and food security by: (i) providing
46 assistance in scheduling medical appointments, (ii) promoting access to farmers markets and
47 other programs to maximize food budgets and (iii) providing education on healthy eating habits,
48 meal planning and cost-effective grocery shopping. The program shall assist program
49 participants in enrolling for state benefit programs to achieve this goal, including but not limited
50 to MassHealth and the healthy incentives program.

51 (g) The executive office shall develop and implement a comprehensive monitoring
52 system for housing consumer education centers to track and report on program outcomes,
53 including eviction prevention rates, progress toward financial stability and participant
54 satisfaction. Housing consumer education centers shall conduct regular surveys and feedback
55 sessions to gather input from program participants, landlords and service providers to program
56 improvement. Annually, not later than October 31, the executive office shall submit a report to
57 the chairs of the house and senate committees on ways and means, the chairs of the joint

58 committee on housing, and the chairs of the joint committee on children, families and persons
59 with disabilities summarizing program outcomes. The executive office may collaborate with
60 academic institutions or research organizations to evaluate the long-term impact of the program
61 on housing stability and financial well-being.

62 SECTION 2. Not later than January 1, 2026, the executive office shall establish a detailed
63 implementation plan to launch the program by September 1, 2026, including timelines,
64 milestones and resource allocation. The executive office shall collaborate with relevant
65 government agencies, community organizations and stakeholders to ensure proper execution and
66 coordination of the program.

67 SECTION 3. Section 16 of chapter 185 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
68 amended by adding the following paragraph:-

69 All housing specialists shall review each eviction action brought before the court to
70 determine if the tenant has the necessary financial literacy skills and tools and arrange services as
71 required. Housing specialists may refer individuals to the Massachusetts rental assistance and
72 financial stability program established in section 31 of chapter 23.

73 SECTION 4. Section 19D of chapter 218 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
74 amended by adding the following paragraph:-

75 All housing specialists shall review each eviction action brought before the court to
76 determine if the tenant has the necessary financial literacy skills and tools and arrange services as
77 required. Housing specialists may refer individuals to the Massachusetts rental assistance and
78 financial stability program established in section 31 of chapter 23.