HOUSE No. 1858

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Linda Dorcena Forry

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 to promote financial stability and asset development.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Linda Dorcena Forry	12th Suffolk
James B. Eldridge	
Theodore C. Speliotis	13th Essex
Antonio F. D. Cabral	13th Bristol
Michael J. Moran	18th Suffolk
Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.	26th Middlesex
David B. Sullivan	6th Bristol
Ann-Margaret Ferrante	5th Essex
Jonathan Hecht	29th Middlesex
Gloria L. Fox	7th Suffolk
Michael D. Brady	9th Plymouth
Byron Rushing	9th Suffolk
Denise Andrews	2nd Franklin
Frank I. Smizik	15th Norfolk
Alice K. Wolf	25th Middlesex
Jennifer E. Benson	37th Middlesex
Carl M. Sciortino, Jr.	34th Middlesex
Tom Sannicandro	7th Middlesex

James J. O'Day	14th Worcester
Patricia D. Jehlen	
Cory Atkins	14th Middlesex
Christine E. Canavan	10th Plymouth
Sonia Chang-Diaz	
Carlos Henriquez	5th Suffolk
Kevin G. Honan	17th Suffolk
Thomas A. Golden, Jr.	16th Middlesex
Ellen Story	3rd Hampshire
Marcos A. Devers	16th Essex
Russell E. Holmes	6th Suffolk
Benjamin Swan	11th Hampden

HOUSE No. 1858

By Ms. Forry of Boston, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1858) of Linda Dorcena Forry and others 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. 38 OF 2009-2010.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Eleven

An Act to promote 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:

- 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

- 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;
- 13 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 the 15 individual orally and in writing that said work program requirement may be met by participation 16 17 in vocational educational programs, including adult basic education, English for speakers of other languages, skills training, certificate programs, and higher education programs, (ii) inform 18 the individual of all vocational educational programs available in the relevant geographic region 19 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;
- 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 the 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

- 32 without a high school diploma and/or English for speakers of other language instruction for those
- 33 with limited English proficiency, including but not limited to programs at community colleges;
- e) encourage and allow individuals to satisfy their work program requirements pursuant
- 35 to said section 110(j), in whole or in part and throughout their periods of time limited benefits
- 36 and any extension periods, by participating in vocational educational training programs; and
- f) grant extensions of the time limit to enable individuals to complete such programs if
- 38 they are making satisfactory progress toward an achievable vocational goal.
- 39 SECTION 2. Subsection (b) of section 110 of chapter 5 of the acts of 1995, as most
- 40 recently amended by section 308 of chapter 159 of the acts of 2000, is further amended by
- 41 striking out said subsection and inserting in place thereof the following new subsection:
- 42 (b) In order to encourage asset development, promote employment, prevent
- 43 homelessness, and simplify administration, otherwise eligible families shall not be subject to a
- 44 resource limit.
- 45 SECTION 3. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, in order to
- 46 encourage asset development, promote employment, prevent homelessness, and simplify
- 47 administration, persons otherwise eligible for the program of emergency aid to elders, disabled
- 48 and children under chapter 117A of the General Laws shall not be subject to a resource limit.
- 49 SECTION 4. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, on or before
- 50 October 1, 2011, the department of transitional assistance shall establish a generally applicable
- 51 work expense deduction within the program of transitional aid to families with dependent
- 52 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.
- 62 SECTION 6. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary and in order to 63 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 64 general laws and transitional aid to families with dependent children under chapter 118 of the 65 General Laws, the department of transitional assistance shall treat as noncountable with regard to 66 any maximum countable resource limits and the lump sum income rule up to \$10,000 that has 67 been expended or is placed in an Individual Asset Account for later expenditure for costs related 68 to education or training, transportation to work or to other activities of daily living, obtaining or 69 retaining or maintaining housing, debt reduction, starting a business, health care, basic household 70 necessities, or other responsible expenses as identified by the department.