

Committee on Public Health
Bill Summary

Bill No. H2466
Title: *An Act supporting survivors through financial assistance*
Sponsor: Representative Sally P. Kerans/Senator Robyn K. Kennedy
Committee: Public Health
Hearing Date: June 25, 2025
Similar Matters: S1562
Prior History: New File
Reporting Deadline: August 24, 2025

Current Law:

- **M.G.L. Chapter 111** pertains to public health.

Summary:

This bill establishes the Flexible Assistance for Survivors pilot grant program under DPH and establishes a 6-person advisory committee to oversee the grant application process.

SECTION 1 amends M.G.L. Chapter 111 by adding a new section, Section 245.

Section 245:

Subsection (A) defines “community-based organization,” “family member,” “grant program,” “flexible cash assistance,” “department,” and “survivor of violence” for this act.

Subsection (B) establishes the Flexible Assistance for Survivors (FAS) pilot program to be administered by DPH. The pilot program’s goal is to improve safety, healing, and financial stability for survivors and the loved ones of those violently injured or killed.

Subsection (C) requires FAS grants to be made to qualifying community-based organizations for the purpose of establishing assistance funds to distribute in direct cash assistance to survivors.

Subsection (D) - (E) requires DPH to establish a 6-person advisory committee to oversee the FAS pilot program. The advisory committee must include persons who have been impacted by violence, formerly incarcerated persons, and persons with direct experience in implementing supportive services for marginalized survivors. A person’s criminal history will not disqualify them from being appointed to the advisory board.

Subsection (F) requires the advisory committee to establish rules for implementing the pilot program and to make grants on a competitive basis to community-based organizations.

Applications for grants under the pilot program must include:

- A description of the organization's history serving one or more groups identified as survivors of violence
- A description of how the community or communities the organization serves are impacted by violence and incarceration
- The estimated number of survivors of violence that the organization or program currently serves
- The estimated number of survivors of violence that the organization or program anticipates it will distribute grant funds to
- How the organization plans to distribute flexible cash assistance funds to survivors to meet immediate financial needs quickly
- How the organization plans to minimize the burden on survivors to provide documentation or submit paperwork.

Subsection (G) requires the advisory committee to:

- Strive to minimize the paperwork burden on grant applicants and grantees
- Strive to develop an application, awards, and reporting process that is accessible to community-based organizations with smaller budgets or without past experience receiving a state grant award
- Develop a plan to publicize the grant program in advance of the application deadline
- Create guidelines around effective and inclusive evidence-based direct cash 87 distribution practices for grantees
- Provide technical assistance to applicants and grantees
- Work with the department to develop tools to support applicants applying for an award under this chapter
- Before the application deadline, work with DPH to publicize and host at least two webinars that are open to the public detailing how to apply for a grant under this chapter

Subsection (H) makes community-based organizations eligible to apply for a FAS grant when the organization has a history of serving survivors of violence and the majority of the people the organization, or a project within the organization that will administer the grant, serves are survivors of violence.

Subsections (J) - (I) require the advisory committee to give preference to organizations that are located in, serve, and employ members of communities that experience disproportionately high rates of gun violence and imprisonment. Preference must also be given to community-based organizations that have a history of providing services to vulnerable survivors, including, but not limited to:

- survivors of color
- elderly survivors
- survivors with disabilities

- survivors who are transgender or gender nonconforming
- survivors from communities that have been disproportionately criminalized/policed
- survivors who are formerly incarcerated or who have past arrests or convictions
- survivors who are undocumented/at risk of becoming undocumented
- survivors who are unhoused
- survivors of firearm injuries
- survivors who have lost a family member to homicide
- survivors facing mental health crises
- low-income survivors
- survivors challenged by substance misuse

Subsection (K) outlines how organizations in receipt of a grant under this chapter may use funds.

Subsection (L) requires community-based organizations in receipt of a grant under this chapter to establish policies and procedures for distributing funds to survivors and outlines requirements of said policies and procedures.

Subsection (M) clarifies that cash assistance received under this chapter must be treated in the same manner as the federal earned income refund to determine eligibility to receive benefits.

Subsection (N) requires each grantee to report the following information to DPH annually:

- The aggregate number of survivors who received cash assistance through the grant program
- The average amount of assistance each survivor received through the grant program
- High-level aggregate data on how the funds are being utilized by programs and survivors

Subsection (O) allows DPH to use up to 5% of the funds appropriated for the grant program each year for the costs of administering the grant program.

Subsection (P) requires DPH to post a public report on the impact of the grant program, including policy recommendations, on its website by July 1, 2028.