

**SENATE . . . . . No. 01839**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

*James B. Eldridge*

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 passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act promoting financial stability and asset development.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>
<i>Linda Dorcena Forry</i>	<i>12th Suffolk</i>
<i>Peter V. Kocot</i>	<i>1st Hampshire</i>
<i>Susan C. Fargo</i>	<i>Third Middlesex</i>
<i>Kenneth J. Donnelly</i>	<i>Fourth Middlesex</i>
<i>Carl M. Sciortino, Jr.</i>	<i>34th Middlesex</i>
<i>Harriette L. Chandler</i>	<i>First Worcester</i>
<i>Gloria L. Fox</i>	<i>7th Suffolk</i>
<i>Michael F. Rush</i>	<i>Suffolk and Norfolk</i>
<i>Cory Atkins</i>	<i>14th Middlesex</i>
<i>Sal N. DiDomenico</i>	<i>Middlesex, Suffolk, and Essex</i>
<i>Patricia D. Jehlen</i>	<i>Second Middlesex</i>
<i>Frank I. Smizik</i>	<i>15th Norfolk</i>
<i>Kevin Aguiar</i>	<i>7th Bristol</i>
<i>Denise Andrews</i>	<i>2nd Franklin</i>
<i>Sonia Chang-Diaz</i>	<i>Second Suffolk</i>
<i>Thomas M. McGee</i>	<i>Third Essex and Middlesex</i>

<i>Denise Provost</i>	<i>27th Middlesex</i>
<i>Joyce A. Spiliotis</i>	<i>12th Essex</i>
<i>Karen E. Spilka</i>	<i>Second Middlesex and Norfolk</i>
<i>Ellen Story</i>	<i>3rd Hampshire</i>

# SENATE . . . . . No. 01839

By Mr. Eldridge, petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1839) of James B. Eldridge, Linda Dorcena Forry, Peter V. Kocot, Susan C. Fargo and other members of the General Court for legislation to promote asset development in transitional assistance programs [Joint Committee on 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 promoting 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:*

1 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  
11 little or no cost to the individual, including adult basic education, English for speakers of other  
12 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  
14 pursuant to section 110 (j) of chapter 5 of the acts of 1995 and before completion of any  
15 Employment Development Plan pursuant to section 110 (h) of said chapter 5, (i) inform the  
16 individual orally and in writing that said work program requirement may be met by participation  
17 in vocational educational programs, including adult basic education, English for speakers of  
18 other languages, skills training, certificate programs, and higher education programs, (ii) inform  
19 the individual of all vocational educational programs available in the relevant geographic region  
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;

22 c) at least 30 days before an individual becomes subject to the work program requirement  
23 pursuant to section 110 (j) of chapter 5 of the acts of 1995 and before completion of any  
24 Employment Development Plan pursuant to section 110 (h) of said chapter 5, provide the  
25 individual with counseling on how to access vocational educational training without incurring  
26 debt, including but not limited to information on the availability of funding for such programs  
27 through the Employment Services Program, the Workforce Investment Act, PELL grants, the  
28 Educational Rewards program, the Department of Education, and appropriate referrals to such  
29 vocational educational training;

30 d) use funds appropriated for the department's Employment Services Program to expand  
31 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;

34 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

37 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  
53 not limited to payroll deductions, transportation, and clothing expenses. Said work expense  
54 deduction shall initially be no less than \$250 and shall thereafter be adjusted annually to reflect  
55 inflation.

56 SECTION 5. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, payments  
57 under state or private work study programs and state grants for education or training shall not be  
58 counted as income or a resource in determining eligibility for or benefits levels under the  
59 program of emergency aid to elders, disabled and children under chapter 117A of the General  
60 Laws and the program of transitional aid to families with dependent children under chapter 118  
61 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  
64 the programs of emergency aid to elders, disabled and children under chapter 117A of the  
65 general laws and transitional aid to families with dependent children under chapter 118 of the  
66 General Laws, the department of transitional assistance shall treat as noncountable with regard to  
67 any maximum countable resource limits and the lump sum income rule up to \$10,000 that has  
68 been expended or is placed in an Individual Asset Account for later expenditure for costs related  
69 to education or training, transportation to work or to other activities of daily living, obtaining or  
70 retaining or maintaining housing, debt reduction, starting a business, health care, basic household  
71 necessities, or other responsible expenses as identified by the department.