

SENATE No. 2726

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court
(2019-2020)

SENATE, June 1, 2020.

The committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities, to whom was referred the petitions (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 31) of Joanne M. Comerford, Natalie M. Higgins, James B. Eldridge, Marjorie C. Decker and other members of the General Court for legislation to provide for coordinated data and assistance to address family homelessness; and (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 58) of Jason M. Lewis, Joanne M. Comerford, James B. Eldridge, Kay Khan and other members of the General Court for legislation relative to economic mobility for families with low-income, reports recommending that the accompanying bill (Senate, No. 2726) ought to pass

For the committee,
Sonia Chang-Diaz

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court
(2019-2020)**

An Act relative to economic mobility for families with low-income.

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 18 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
2 section 39 the following section:-

3 Section 40. (a) The department of transitional assistance shall establish a telephone
4 hotline for citizens to have the ability to get advice on program benefits, program eligibility,
5 application processes and intersectionality with other programs facilitated by agencies other than
6 the department of transitional assistance, including but not limited to the executive office of
7 housing and economic development, the executive office of labor and workforce development,
8 and the executive office of education.

9 (b) There shall be a benefits calculator for use by the public through a website with
10 instructions for the public.

11 (c) Information about the hotline and benefits calculator including the phone number
12 shall be posted on the executive office of health and human services, executive office of
13 housing and economic development, executive office of labor and workforce development

14 office's websites, and be made available to homeless service providers in a form appropriate for
15 distribution to their clients.

16 (d) The department of transitional assistance shall provide training for calculating
17 benefits using a benefits calculator in order to optimize benefits to avoid cliff effects to executive
18 offices and agencies involved in distributing benefits programs.

19 SECTION 2. (a) The executive office of health and human services, the department of
20 transitional assistance, executive office of housing and economic development, executive office
21 of labor and workforce development and executive office of education shall file an annual report
22 based on data from the previous fiscal year for the purposes of gaining a deeper understanding of
23 housing instability faced by families in order to efficiently predict and better direct homelessness
24 prevention and housing resources. The report shall include the following metrics:

25 (1) The number of client households that have been identified as homeless and at risk of
26 homelessness by each agency; (2) The numbers of households receiving Emergency Assistance
27 Shelter also receiving benefits and services from the following: (i) Department of Transitional
28 Assistance – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Transitional Aid for Families with
29 Dependent Children; (ii) Workforce Development Programs; (iii) Department of Children and
30 Families; (iv) Department of Public Health - Early Intervention Services (v) MassHealth; and (vi)
31 income sources for families in shelter; (3) MassHealth data on housing instability screening for
32 patients; (4) The stability of households that have received assistance from the HomeBASE
33 program, including, the number of households that have received assistance from the
34 HomeBASE program under line-item 7004-0108, the numbers of households that were evicted,
35 the numbers that returned to shelter, number of households with DCF involvement, numbers

36 with incomes below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level. The Department shall coordinate with
37 programs under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services on matching data sets for
38 the purposes of this report; (5) The number of contracted slots for homeless children and the
39 current utilization, the number of childcare vouchers issued to homelessness households based
40 off of data from the Department of Early Education and Care; and (6) The cross agency working
41 groups and committees relative to homelessness, that are currently active at the state agencies,
42 will submit their reports and finding on housing stability and economic mobility.

43 (b) The report shall be submitted to the clerks of the house and the senate, the house and
44 senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on children families and persons with
45 disabilities, the joint committee on labor and workforce development and the interagency council
46 on housing and homelessness no later than October 31 of each year.

47 SECTION 3. The executive office of administration and finance in conjunction with the
48 executive office of health and human services, the department of transitional assistance, the
49 executive office of housing and economic development, the executive office of labor and
50 workforce development and the executive office of education shall conduct and publish an
51 impact study report on the impacts of minimum wage increase as directed in the chapter 121 of
52 the acts of 2018 on households with low incomes who would lose the eligibility of benefits due
53 to the wage increase with decline in net resources and face cliff effects. The impact study shall
54 also recommend directives to determine ways to adjust assistance in response to changes in
55 income, including but not limited to automatic adjustments tied to minimum wage increases and
56 options for increasing utilization of the earned income tax credit in order to prevent families
57 from facing cliff effects. The report shall be submitted to the clerks of the house and the senate,
58 the house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on children families

59 and persons with disabilities, the joint committee on labor and workforce development and the
60 interagency council on housing and homelessness no later than January 1, 2022.

61 SECTION 4. The executive office of health and human services, the department of
62 transitional assistance, executive office of housing and economic development, executive office
63 of labor and workforce development and executive office of education shall examine economic
64 mobility programs, recommend criteria for evaluation and create a mechanism for evaluating
65 economic mobility programs for program outcomes including changes in earned income,
66 education and state and federally funded services and the feedback of participants and those not
67 enrolled in programs, for the purpose of producing a report. The report shall recommend
68 directives for each executive office to expand outreach to eligible non-participants to boost
69 enrollment. The report shall outline the outcomes for economic mobility and financial stability
70 programs for families and individuals with extremely low incomes, as defined by the United
71 States Department of Housing and Urban Development. The report shall be submitted to the
72 clerks of the house and the senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint
73 committee on children families and persons with disabilities, the joint committee on labor and
74 workforce development and the interagency council on housing and homelessness no later than
75 January 1, 2022.

76 SECTION 5. Section 2 is hereby repealed.

77 SECTION 6. Section 5 shall take effect on December 31, 2027.