

**SENATE . . . . . No. 37**

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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>Sonia Chang-Diaz</i>	<i>Second Suffolk</i>
<i>Kay Khan</i>	<i>11th Middlesex</i>
<i>Linda Dorcena Forry</i>	<i>12th Suffolk</i>
<i>Carl M. Sciortino, Jr.</i>	<i>34th Middlesex</i>
<i>Thomas P. Conroy</i>	<i>13th Middlesex</i>
<i>Jason M. Lewis</i>	<i>31st Middlesex</i>
<i>Jennifer E. Benson</i>	<i>37th Middlesex</i>

**SENATE . . . . . No. 37**

By Mr. Eldridge, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 37) of James B. Eldridge, Sonia Chang-Diaz, Kay Khan, Linda Dorcena Forry and other members of the General Court 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. 1839 OF 2011-2012.]

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

**In the Year Two Thousand Thirteen**

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 languages and instruction for  
33 those with limited English proficiency, including but not limited to programs at community  
34 colleges;

35 e) encourage and allow individuals to satisfy their work program requirements pursuant  
36 to said section 110(j), in whole or in part and throughout their periods of time limited benefits  
37 and any extension periods, by participating in vocational educational training programs; and

38 f) grant extensions of the time limit to enable individuals to complete such programs if  
39 they are making satisfactory progress toward an achievable vocational goal.

40 SECTION 2. Subsection (b) of section 110 of chapter 5 of the acts of 1995, as most  
41 recently amended by section 308 of chapter 159 of the acts of 2000, is further amended by  
42 striking out said subsection and inserting in place thereof the following new subsection:

43 (b) In order to encourage asset development, promote employment, prevent  
44 homelessness, and simplify administration, otherwise eligible families shall not be subject to a  
45 resource limit.

46 SECTION 3. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, in order to  
47 encourage asset development, promote employment, prevent homelessness, and simplify  
48 administration, persons otherwise eligible for the program of emergency aid to elders, disabled  
49 and children under chapter 117A of the General Laws shall not be subject to a resource limit.

50 SECTION 4. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, on or before  
51 October 1, 2013, the department of transitional assistance shall establish a generally applicable  
52 work expense deduction within the program of transitional aid to families with dependent  
53 children at a level intended to cover work expenses incurred by working recipients, including but  
54 not limited to payroll deductions, transportation, and clothing expenses. Said work expense  
55 deduction shall initially be no less than \$250 and shall thereafter be adjusted annually to reflect  
56 inflation.

57 SECTION 5. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, payments under  
58 state or private work study programs and state grants for education or training shall not be  
59 counted as income or a resource in determining eligibility for or benefits levels under the  
60 program of emergency aid to elders, disabled and children under chapter 117A of the General  
61 Laws and the program of transitional aid to families with dependent children under chapter 118  
62 of the General Laws.

63 SECTION 6. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary and in order to  
64 encourage asset development, promote employment, and prevent homelessness, with respect to  
65 the programs of emergency aid to elders, disabled and children under chapter 117A of the  
66 general laws and transitional aid to families with dependent children under chapter 118 of the  
67 General Laws, the department of transitional assistance shall treat as uncountable with regard to  
68 any maximum countable resource limits and the lump sum income rule up to \$10,000 that has  
69 been expended or is placed in an Individual Asset Account for later expenditure for costs related  
70 to education or training, transportation to work or to other activities of daily living, obtaining or  
71 retaining or maintaining housing, debt reduction, starting a business, health care, basic household  
72 necessities, or other responsible expenses as identified by the department.