

SENATE No. 44

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 adoption 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>Denise Provost</i>	<i>27th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Bruce E. Tarr</i>	<i>First Essex and Middlesex</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Mary S. Keefe</i>	<i>15th Worcester</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>

SENATE No. 44

By Mr. Eldridge, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 44) of James B. Eldridge, Denise Provost, Bruce E. Tarr and Mary S. Keefe for legislation to promote financial stability and asset development. Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. 37 OF 2017-2018.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

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. Subsection (j) of section 110 of chapter 5 of the acts of 1995 is hereby
2 amended by adding the following paragraph:

3 The department shall:

- 4 (1) at least 30 days before an individual becomes subject to the work program
5 requirement pursuant to this subsection and before completion of any employment development
6 plan pursuant to subsection (h), (i) inform the individual orally and in writing that said work
7 program requirement may be met by participation in a vocational educational program, including
8 adult basic education, English for speakers of other languages, skills training, certificate
9 programs, and higher education programs, (ii) inform the individual of all vocational educational

10 programs available in the relevant geographic region that can be accessed at little or no cost to
11 the individual, and (iii) inform that individual of the policies described in subsections (e) and (f);

12 (2) at least 30 days before an individual becomes subject to the work program
13 requirement pursuant to this subsection and before completion of any employment development
14 plan pursuant to subsection (h), provide the individual with counseling on how to access
15 vocational educational training without incurring debt, including but not limited to information
16 on the availability of funding for such programs through the employment services program, the
17 Workforce Investment Act, federal Pell grants pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 1070, the educational
18 rewards program, the U.S. Department of Education, and appropriate referrals to such vocational
19 educational training;

20 (3) use funds appropriated for the department's employment services program to expand
21 the availability of programs that integrate skills training with adult basic education for those
22 without a high school diploma and English for speakers of other languages and instruction for
23 those with limited English proficiency, including but not limited to programs at community
24 colleges;

25 (4) encourage and allow an individual to satisfy the work program requirement pursuant
26 to said this subsection, in whole or in part and throughout the period of time limited benefits and
27 any extension periods, by participating in a vocational educational training program; and

28 (5) grant extensions of the time limit to enable an individual to complete such programs if
29 the individual is making satisfactory progress toward an achievable vocational goal.

30 SECTION 2. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, in order to
31 encourage asset development, promote employment, prevent homelessness, and simplify

32 administration, persons otherwise eligible for the program of emergency aid to elders, disabled
33 and children under chapter 117A shall not be subject to a resource limit.

34 SECTION 3. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, on or before
35 October 1, 2019, the department of transitional assistance shall establish a generally applicable
36 work expense deduction within the program of transitional aid to families with dependent
37 children at a level intended to cover work expenses incurred by working recipients, including but
38 not limited to payroll deductions, transportation, and clothing expenses. Said work expense
39 deduction shall be not less than \$250 and shall thereafter be adjusted annually to reflect inflation.

40 SECTION 4. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, payments under
41 state or private work study programs and state grants for education or training shall not be
42 counted as income or a resource in determining eligibility for or benefits levels under the
43 program of emergency aid to elders, disabled and children under chapter 117A and the program
44 of transitional aid to families with dependent children under chapter 118.

45 SECTION 5. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary and in order to
46 encourage asset development, promote employment, and prevent homelessness, with respect to
47 the programs of emergency aid to elders, disabled and children under chapter 117A and
48 transitional aid to families with dependent children under chapter 118, the department of
49 transitional assistance shall treat as uncountable with regard to any maximum countable resource
50 limits and the lump sum income rule up to \$10,000 that has been expended or is placed in an
51 individual asset account for later expenditure for costs related to education or training,
52 transportation to work or to other activities of daily living, obtaining or retaining or maintaining

- 53 housing, debt reduction, starting a business, health care, basic household necessities, or other
- 54 responsible expenses as identified by the department.