

SENATE No. 70

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>Jason M. Lewis</i>	<i>Fifth Middlesex</i>
<i>Jennifer E. Benson</i>	<i>37th Middlesex</i>
<i>Sean Garballey</i>	<i>23rd Middlesex</i>
<i>Barbara L'Italien</i>	<i>Second Essex and Middlesex</i>
<i>Linda Dorcena Forry</i>	<i>First Suffolk</i>
<i>Peter V. Kocot</i>	<i>1st Hampshire</i>
<i>Benjamin Swan</i>	<i>11th Hampden</i>
<i>David M. Rogers</i>	<i>24th Middlesex</i>
<i>Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.</i>	<i>26th Middlesex</i>

SENATE No. 70

By Mr. Eldridge, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 70) of James B. Eldridge, Jason M. Lewis, Jennifer E. Benson, Sean Garballey 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. 37 OF 2013-2014.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court
(2015-2016)**

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) at least 30 days before an individual becomes subject to the work program
9 requirement pursuant to section 110 (j) of chapter 5 of the acts of 1995 and before completion of

10 any Employment Development Plan pursuant to section 110 (h) of said chapter 5, (i) inform the
11 individual orally and in writing that said work program requirement may be met by participation
12 in vocational educational programs, including adult basic education, English for speakers of
13 other languages, skills training, certificate programs, and higher education programs, (ii) inform
14 the individual of all vocational educational programs available in the relevant geographic region
15 that can be accessed at little or no cost to the individual, and (iii) inform that individual of the
16 policies described in subsections (e) and (f) of this section;

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

25 (c) use funds appropriated for the department's Employment Services Program to expand
26 the availability of programs that integrate skills training with adult basic education for those
27 without a high school diploma and/or English for speakers of other languages and instruction for
28 those with limited English proficiency, including but not limited to programs at community
29 colleges;

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

33 (e) grant extensions of the time limit to enable individuals to complete such programs if
34 they are making satisfactory progress toward an achievable vocational goal.

35 SECTION 2. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, in order to
36 encourage asset development, promote employment, prevent homelessness, and simplify
37 administration, persons otherwise eligible for the program of emergency aid to elders, disabled
38 and children under chapter 117A of the General Laws shall not be subject to a resource limit.

39 SECTION 3. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, on or before
40 October 1, 2013, the department of transitional assistance shall establish a generally applicable
41 work expense deduction within the program of transitional aid to families with dependent
42 children at a level intended to cover work expenses incurred by working recipients, including but
43 not limited to payroll deductions, transportation, and clothing expenses. Said work expense
44 deduction shall initially be no less than \$250 and shall thereafter be adjusted annually to reflect
45 inflation.

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

52 SECTION 5. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary and in order to
53 encourage asset development, promote employment, and prevent homelessness, with respect to
54 the programs of emergency aid to elders, disabled and children under chapter 117A of the
55 general laws and transitional aid to families with dependent children under chapter 118 of the
56 General Laws, the department of transitional assistance shall treat as uncountable with regard to
57 any maximum countable resource limits and the lump sum income rule up to \$10,000 that has
58 been expended or is placed in an Individual Asset Account for later expenditure for costs related
59 to education or training, transportation to work or to other activities of daily living, obtaining or
60 retaining or maintaining housing, debt reduction, starting a business, health care, basic household
61 necessities, or other responsible expenses as identified by the department.