

**SENATE . . . . . No. 797**

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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 adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act relative to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>	
<i>Harriette L. Chandler</i>	<i>First Worcester</i>	<i>1/28/2019</i>
<i>Jason M. Lewis</i>	<i>Fifth Middlesex</i>	<i>1/28/2019</i>
<i>Mike Connolly</i>	<i>26th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/28/2019</i>
<i>John J. Lawn, Jr.</i>	<i>10th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/29/2019</i>
<i>Michael J. Barrett</i>	<i>Third Middlesex</i>	<i>1/29/2019</i>
<i>Kay Khan</i>	<i>11th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/30/2019</i>
<i>Thomas M. Stanley</i>	<i>9th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/30/2019</i>
<i>James T. Welch</i>	<i>Hampden</i>	<i>1/30/2019</i>
<i>Sal N. DiDomenico</i>	<i>Middlesex and Suffolk</i>	<i>1/30/2019</i>
<i>Jennifer E. Benson</i>	<i>37th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Paul R. Feeney</i>	<i>Bristol and Norfolk</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Mary S. Keefe</i>	<i>15th Worcester</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Jack Patrick Lewis</i>	<i>7th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Denise Provost</i>	<i>27th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Patricia D. Jehlen</i>	<i>Second Middlesex</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Diana DiZoglio</i>	<i>First Essex</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Joanne M. Comerford</i>	<i>Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>

<i>Elizabeth A. Malia</i>	<i>11th Suffolk</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Michael O. Moore</i>	<i>Second Worcester</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Steven Ultrino</i>	<i>33rd Middlesex</i>	<i>2/7/2019</i>
<i>Tram T. Nguyen</i>	<i>18th Essex</i>	<i>2/14/2019</i>

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By Mr. Eldridge, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 797) of James B. Eldridge, Harriette L. Chandler, Jason M. Lewis, Mike Connolly and other members of the General Court for legislation relative to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program. Housing.

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[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION  
SEE SENATE, NO. 719 OF 2017-2018.]

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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

An Act relative to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program.

*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 121B of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the  
2 following section:-

3           Section 61. Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program

4           (a) The department shall, subject to appropriation, establish and administer through  
5 administering agencies ,the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program also known as MRVP, a  
6 program of rental assistance for eligible low-income, very low-income, and extremely low-  
7 income households through mobile and project-based vouchers for the purpose of obtaining  
8 decent, stable, and affordable housing and promoting economically mixed housing.

9 (b) To be eligible to receive assistance under this section, a household shall have a net  
10 income that does not exceed 80 percent of the area median income, as determined by the U.S.  
11 Department of Housing and Urban Development. The department may award mobile vouchers to  
12 eligible households occupying MRVP project-based units that shall expire due to the nonrenewal  
13 of project-based rental assistance contracts. Households shall meet eligibility requirements as  
14 required in this section and applicable regulations and guidance issued by the department. Not  
15 less than 75 percent of the vouchers shall be targeted to households whose income at initial  
16 occupancy does not exceed 30 percent of the area median income.

17 (c) A payment standard is the amount used by an administering agency to calculate the  
18 maximum amount of the MRVP subsidy. Except as provided under paragraph (d), the payment  
19 standard for each size of a dwelling unit in a market area shall not exceed 110 percent of the fair  
20 market rent, or Small Area Fair Market Rent as established annually by the U.S. Department of  
21 Housing and Urban Development, for the same size of dwelling unit in the same market area and  
22 shall be not less than 100 percent of that fair market rent, except that no administering agency  
23 shall be required as a result of a reduction in the fair market rent to reduce the payment standard  
24 applied to a household continuing to reside in a unit for which the household was receiving  
25 assistance under this section at the time the fair market rent was reduced. The department shall  
26 allow administering agencies to request exception payment standards within fair market rental  
27 areas subject to criteria and procedures established by the department.

28 (d) The department may require an administering agency to submit the payment standard  
29 of the administering agency to the department for approval, if the payment standard is less than  
30 100 percent of the fair market rent or exceeds 110 percent of the fair market rent, except that an  
31 administering agency may establish a payment standard of not more than 120 percent of the fair

32 market rent where necessary as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability,  
33 without approval of the department. An administering agency may use a payment standard that is  
34 greater than 120 percent of the fair market rent as a reasonable accommodation for a person with  
35 a disability, but only with the approval of the department. In connection with the use of any  
36 increased payment standard established or approved pursuant to either of the preceding two  
37 sentences as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability, the department may not  
38 establish additional requirements regarding the amount of adjusted income paid by such person  
39 for rent.

40 (e) A household that receives tenant-based assistance under this section, with respect to  
41 any dwelling unit, shall not pay for rent more than forty per cent of the monthly adjusted net  
42 income of the household. The department may adjust household rent for those paying separately  
43 for utilities.

44 (f) The rent for dwelling units for which a housing assistance payment contract is  
45 established under this subsection shall be reasonable in comparison with rents charged for  
46 comparable dwelling units in the private, unassisted local market.

47 (g) For each dwelling unit for which a housing assistance payment contract is established  
48 under this section, the administering agency shall inspect the unit before any assistance payment  
49 is made to determine whether the dwelling unit meets the minimum standards of fitness for  
50 human habitation as required by the State Sanitary Code. These requirements cannot be waived.  
51 Each administering agency providing assistance under this section shall, for each assisted  
52 dwelling unit, make inspection not less often than biennially during the term of the housing

53 assistance payments contract for the unit to determine whether the unit is maintained in  
54 accordance with the requirements of this paragraph.

55 (h) Effective as of January 1, 2021, the monthly administrative fee for all vouchers  
56 administered under this section shall be not less than \$80.00 per voucher, per month.

57 (i) The department shall maintain and administer a single voucher management system  
58 and shall collect data on the utilization of rental vouchers in each fiscal year under this program.  
59 This data shall include, but not be limited to, the location and value of each voucher-assisted  
60 unit, the number and average value of mobile and project-based r vouchers currently distributed  
61 in the Commonwealth, in each county, and in each municipality, the household size, age of the  
62 head of household and each member of the household, the race and ethnicity of each household,  
63 the income and course of income of each household. The department shall report to the House  
64 and Senate Committees on Ways and Means and Joint Committee on Housing annually on the  
65 utilization of rental vouchers in each fiscal year under this program. The department shall collect  
66 and report on the data collection as required under Chapter 334 of the Acts of 2006.

67 (j) The department shall promulgate regulations and guidance to implement this section  
68 no later than June 30, 2020.